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LONDON'S LATIN QUARTER









A GARDEN FÊTE AT THE CHELSEA ARTS CLUB

# LONDON'S LATIN QUARTER

By KENNETH HARE With Thirty-six  
Illustrations in Colour and Black and White by  
DOROTHEA ST. JOHN GEORGE

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TO  
DOUGLAS JERROLD





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# LONDON'S LATIN QUARTER



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## CHAPTER I

"Roses bloom in Chelsea."

SONGS OF OLD LONDON.

LET me dispense with flourishes and plunge straightway into reminiscences, and let me express, should the spirit move me, any philosophic reflections which may come to mind about London's Latin Quarter. Not indeed that there is any definable locality which may justify that title. The Latin Quarter in London is not topographical ; it is in the mind, it is a mental attitude. Let me plunge, like the Keatsian diver, into magic waters, and let me hope that my fate will not be his, to "go all naked to the hungry shark." Perhaps my researches will be rewarded with some rich Orient pearl, perhaps I shall return gasping to the surface with only a handful of seaweed. In any case the great "vast of things" will not be very materially affected.

I discovered Chelsea shortly after leaving Oxford, saw it with "eyes of youth" and thought it a revelation of beauty. The rich sunlight falling on the mellow brickwork of those old Georgian and Stuart houses, glimpsed now for

the first time, created a picture never to be forgotten. I thought of that long bed-roll of notable names which no one can fail to associate with this quaint corner of the world, no one at least who possesses that enviable if uncanny gift of seeing, as did Robert Browning,

Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

I thought of that early Chelsea model Henry VIII, who sat unwittingly and inspired that admirable creation Blue-beard. I saw him walking in a Chelsea garden with his arm thrown lovingly about the neck of that genial humorist and historian, the chivalrous Lord Chancellor of England, Sir Thomas More. An ominous symptom for his friends of either sex when Bluff Harry appeared at all sentimental about them! I thought of Dean Swift, of William Morris and Rossetti, of the divine Keats upon a visit to Leigh Hunt, and of Wilde and "Jimmy" Whistler, and I thought very particularly about Nell Gwynne, whom I remembered to have seen depicted somewhere as a naked Cupid playing with a dart.

Within a few weeks of my discovery of Chelsea, I had secured an empty room in unredeemed Lawrence Street, a quarter which of late, I understand, is becoming almost genteel. It was said that the Old House dated back to the days of the Stuarts, but I knew too little about architecture to determine whether this belief should find credence or not. True, an old lady informed me only last Tuesday that a son of the Duke of Monmouth who was defeated at Sedgemoor

appeared there one night, in the spirit, and addressed a public meeting. But I cannot accept this statement as evidence. It further transpired that the Duke, knowing it was the old lady's birthday, had posted from his limbo expressly to wish her many happy returns of the day, and that the public meeting was a mere pretext—a sort of Bunbury. She first met his Grace at a spiritist séance.

The Old House was in that style the fashion of which was first given to our ancestors by the immortal Inigo Jones. There were small picturesque panes in the two windows of my room. There was oak panelling, but the woodwork had been liberally coated over with a heavy deposit of greyish-blue paint. The panels were breast high, and the walls above them were distempered terra-cotta—an incongruous colour scheme, but less displeasing to the eye than one felt it should have been by rights. A large open fire-place, built across one corner of the room, prevented its being over-symmetrical. A room is detestable when its walls are all equal in size, and all its angles right angles.

Yes, a comfortable room enough, despite a gushing little psychic who informed me very positively that it was haunted—a set of jolly three-bottle ghosts, I fancy, but I saw none of them. The spirits with which I was best acquainted in those days were the high animal spirits of a young artist and dreamer, with such supplementary spirits, when Fortune smiled, as cost in those days but half a crown a bottle. The rent of this historic apartment, oak panelling, old fire-place and ghosts included, was—will anyone to-day believe it?

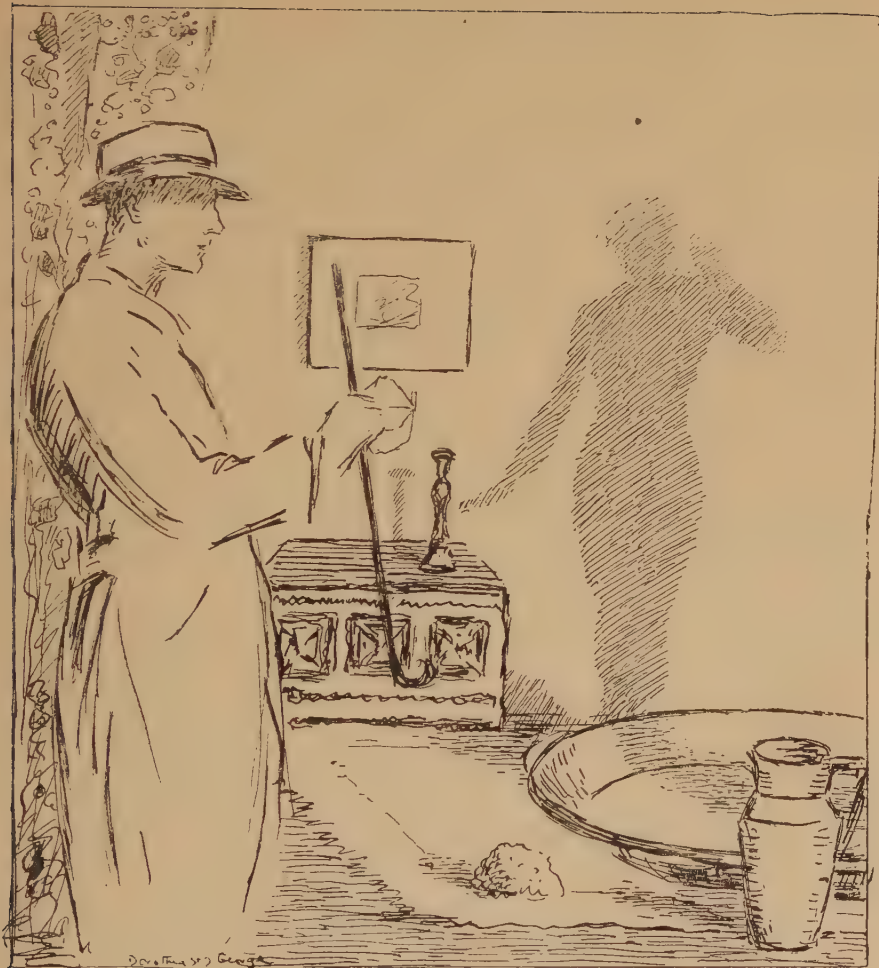


—five shillings per week. And quite enough too, was my mental comment upon the price! Nobody could foresee the world upheaval which was to revolutionize prices, least of all psychics and far-sighted politicians.

The landlord, whom I suspected of having the devil of a temper should circumstances arouse it, was a most easy-going soul about rent. I could go to the seaside, or overseas for a tramp in Normandy, and not find that my apartments had changed hands during my absence. But once, I remember, a gentleman with whom my acquaintance was of the slightest—for I did not see him to exchange a “Good morning” with above once in six months—*lent my room* without so much as troubling to inform me that he had done so, to some lady friend of his own.

Upon my return to my domain after a bicycling tour abroad, I discovered her in my tray-bath. Her figure was Praxitelean, her blush a fairy tale, and, as I bowed myself forth from the presence, I reflected upon the brazenness of the fellow who had let me in for this adventure. I could have hugged him for his unconscionable impertinence in making so free with my belongings.

My landlord had my interests at heart, and constituted himself my retainer. He knew, I imagine, that I was no millionaire; he had a certain fondness for the arts. I remember an Oxford friend—a critic with a marked acerbity of manner—calling round one afternoon when I was out. Though no enemy to good cheer, his tone is one of wintry disillusion when drawn into small talk. And so, for the mere



*I discovered her in my tray bath.  
Her figure was Praxitelean,  
her blush a fairy tale.*



sake of saying something, as the landlord's taciturnity was getting on his nerves—"Is that all the furniture?" he inquired. In a twinkling of time the landlord had flung his arms about his waist, carried him down the rickety stairs, deposited him upon the pavement outside, and slammed the door.

"When he took to making remarks upon your furniture," my Cerberus explained later, "I took it for granted that he was going to sell you up."

I cannot pretend that my rooms were just pure perfection—are there not spots on the sun? The Stuart water supply was drawn from a pump in the back court, which might have proved less inconvenient to a gentleman of the court of Charles the Second than it did to me, for he would not have had to go himself to fill the buckets. The pump stood boldly up from a 'crazy pavement laid down long before crazy pavements went out of fashion only to be revived again. From this pump I would draw the water for my morning bath in an immense wooden pitcher of barrel staves hooped in with iron, which I had had made for me by a cooper in Normandy, at a laughably insignificant figure.

As the room at the back of my bed-sitting room was usually unoccupied, I appropriated it for a bathroom. My ablutions at end, I saved myself the pains of a return journey down the dark, steep and narrow staircase by simply emptying the bath out of the back window, a classic practice for which precedent is to be found in Juvenal. There was a basement into which the bath water used to fall. I fancy I made the house rather damp.

In its earliest days the strange old building must have presented a dignified if not noble appearance, but it had fallen upon times alien to its own. It drew "far hence its birth." Some modern jerry builder had divided the one house into two, giving to either division its separate staircase. The half next door was a hotel. "Hotel" let us call it. *Homo* is a common name to all humanity. The hotel was not of the standing of Claridge's, and I never saw anyone enter whom I suspected of being a duke in disguise.

The hall porter—who was likewise landlord, valet, lift-boy, garage-keeper, boots, cashier, "buttons," accountant, and all the waiters and waitresses and odd-job men upon his staff—presented an appearance of singular originality.

Sartorially he was odd, but so harassed a genius may be pardoned if he found scant time to have his costumes contrived for him by the artists of Bond Street. His habit was the same "what time the whitethorn blows" and in the height of winter. He bore a soul above seasons. His attire was simple and unchanging as that of the youths of Sparta. One remarked especially the threadbare overcoat, worn slate-coloured with age, and buttoned up, always buttoned up to the chin. Rumour of the hundred tongues assured a gossip-loving world that the garment was intended to conceal the absence of coat, waistcoat, tie, shirt, collar and vest. The colour of his straw hat—which he had been seen to wear in a snowstorm—was of a dingy yellow, or rather it bore the same relation to yellow that grey locks when treated with peroxide bear to the sunny curls of seventeen. The hat



brim was serrated, and that in so uneven a style as gave rise to a legend, which I am persuaded was exaggerated, that the hat had upon some occasion—I know not what—been offered as consolation prize to a company of performing rats.

I never enjoyed any personal relations with the devotees of this old-world hostel, but sometimes in the blue silence of a summer night I would hear them swearing.

My furniture was adequate to my occasions. A bookcase with some two score of the poets, a camp bed, a good solid table in modern “old” oak, and a basket chair, of the type which stylists in such articles pronounce to be “cheap and nasty.” This chair was a devil for talking to itself through the long night watches. It was garrulous as a landlady, and so fretful, so querulous. One could fancy it was saying, “I’m never sat on now by any handsome and distinguished ladies, as I used to be in the ’forties. There is no quality to-day. No style. I don’t like this room. I don’t like my present master, and I’ve got rheumatism in all my joints!” And all this talk, you know, was mere brag and bluster, for the chair was not an old chair at all, only faked to resemble one, and as bad an example as a man might wish to come upon of the great epoch of Industry. And I would play the willing dupe and console it, but I never succeeded in persuading it out of its fancies.

The old house was certainly very queer, and the lodgers who occupied the other rooms were even queerer than the house.

"It's a house for a novel by Balzac," said Hugh Kingsmill one evening. "If you were to write a true description of it, who on earth would believe you?"

In the room immediately beneath mine lived one of the most notable, and by far the most eccentric, of the militant suffragettes. It was asserted that, while that campaign was raging, she had on three separate occasions discharged a revolver into the thick of a London mob. Nobody resented these ebullitions of high spirits, but there was one thing they *did* resent, she had *never once succeeded in hitting anybody!* It was "lamentable, deplorable, a futile anticlimax! What? Empty bags always! Could she not even have winged the head keeper? Who was her musketry instructor? He deserved to lose his sergeant's stripes, to be degraded to the ranks, to be shot at dawn!"

It was likewise asserted, and commonly believed, that the lady had brought an action for false imprisonment against her old father. The aged gentleman was supposed to have taken his gods to witness that he desired nothing more than that the lady should remove herself with all manner of expedition. This, he said, had been "the dream of his declining years." The butler's evidence supported the unhappy martyr's contention. The door of the cage had been constantly left open, but the bird refused most stoutly to quit the canary seed and groundsel.

On first applying for apartments, I had asked the landlord if there were no room higher than that he had assigned to me.

"There's *no* room above you," said he, "only a cupboard where I keep my tools."

In saying this he lied in his throat. Some one *was* living above me—an oddity who practised the weirdest nocturnal pranks. I supposed him a lunatic ; quite possibly dangerous. I may have been wrong. He may have been a criminal in hiding. For many months I never so much as clapped eyes on the fellow, for he clung to his hiding-place like an owl to its ivy bush. He never stirred abroad save for a short breathing while, and then only upon the darkest nights. If there were no moon, if it were raining hard, why then, at some such hour as three in the morning, you would hear him emerge from his lair—but ever so softly ! He would pad so quietly that the sound of his footsteps in the stillness suggested some creature of the cat tribe. But this was not the oddest part of the performance. After waiting a few moments in the hall, he would reascend the stairs, not quietly this time, but as noisily as you like, leaping them six at a time, so that he was back at his own door in the shadow of a moment. What did he think to find ? That he had a secret I never doubted. I fancy he thought to surprise some one tampering with the lock, or endeavouring, through chink or cranny, to examine the interior of his den. A miser, perhaps ? Picturesque thought. The "Bradbury" had not as yet made its flimsy appearance. It was a tempting hypothesis ! Did the fellow sit there alone by moonlight pouring gold pieces over his head after the admirable tradition of the "Bells of Corneville" ? Was he a coiner ?

Or a spy perhaps in the Kaiser's pay, and if so, the only soul in Chelsea who foresaw the European War? Or then again—who knows?—a lunatic plain and simple, some Mr. Dick of the landlord's, whom he was anxious to shelter from the indignity of the madhouse?

Having reassured himself that his secret remained his secret, one had only to wait to hear him repeat his first manœuvre. He would be at it again, padding, padding, padding down. On the chance that the gentleman might take it into his head to pay me a *very* early morning call, I made provision. I was possessed of a stout oak candlestick of semi-ecclesiastical design, two foot in height, and of ten inches diameter at the base. Good. I purposed greeting my undesirable guest with disarming cordiality. With my left hand I should have politely concealed a slight yawn. The fingers of my right hand would have been toying, all unconsciously, with the candlestick. Then, with lightning celerity, I should have struck our friend upon the head with it—and one can always apologize later if one has made a mistake.

Hugh Kingsmill, author of the *Will to Love*, and of that profound yet incomparably witty volume, the *Dawn's Delay*, would frequently put up at the rooms—the one mine by purchase, the other by simple adoption. He had made a reputation at Oxford by his editorship of the *Isis*, and his comments upon the Union debates are still a tradition.

"Mr. A. G. Morkill entertained grave doubts but not his audience."



His wit might be compared to the will-o'-th'-wisp's taper which he lights from marsh and mud. Some one had introduced a bore into the Authors' Club, the type of bore for whom club secretaries are tempted to lay down rat poison.

"The White Man's burden"—the fellow reiterated the phrase with relish; I believe he fancied that he had coined it.

"But what is 'The White Man's Burden'?" Hugh inquired, as though genuinely puzzled. "Isn't it a bag of black man's gold?"

We were returning to the rooms after a dance given by the Barribals in their studio at Baron's Court, when a cock crowed suddenly from beneath a grating, as we strode by Walham Green Station.

"What on earth can it find to crow about," cried Hugh, "at *Walham Green*?"

More fowls are kept in London than a country cousin would suppose. There was a cock who loved to crow in the small hours in the neighbourhood of my Lawrence Street residence. We never saw the creature, but became so familiar with his note as to fancy ourselves intimately acquainted. As he piped up his ditty, Hugh would quote those eerie lines from the old ballad, of "The Wife of Usher's Well":

Cocks are crowing a merry midnight,  
I wot the wild-fowls are boding day.

Between us we shaped a legend about the Fowl of Lawrence Street. A sad *bon viveur*, he had acquired the habit of neglecting his own harem to court a fancy in a neighbouring roost. But he was guileless to a degree, the old fellow, and could



not refrain, when his suit progressed favourably, from giving vent to his war-cry, and this trick of his inevitably aroused suspicion.

"Where were you, what were you doing, what was that you were saying?" inquired the quondam favourite in acid tones.

"I was only boding day, my dear," our poor friend would answer, "just that, my dear, boding day."

It was a red-letter day when we succeeded in obtaining posts at two guineas each per week, upon a foolish trifle of a weekly entitled *Hearth and Home*. It was little "Dan" Rider who put us in the way of this "good thing." Regular employment upon the staff of a great London weekly was the way we figured it out. We felt, I remember, Hugh and I, that Fortune was meeting us a trifle more than halfway. We determined to remain honest artists in letters, and we swore that we would not suffer ourselves to be corrupted either by wealth or popular applause. It was true of each of us that "il avait alors cet âge où il est permis de confondre le rêve et la réalité." There was but one dash of gall in this goblet of honeyed wine. Was it altogether good for us to "arrive" too quickly?

I was ushered into the sanctum, where I beheld a mortal who appeared to be some blend between a jaguar and a stockbroker. The large, blue, flashing eye suggested carnivorousness; green mosaic cuff links whispered of prosperity in the City. Crisp brown hair, neatly parted by the wig-maker, and a brown lounge suit fashionably cut, did their

best to modify the extravagant personality of Mr. Frank Harris.

Why this bombshell amongst Britons ever elected to become editor of *Hearth and Home* remains a mystery. So Cœur-de-Lion might have dropped in at a Mothers' Meeting, or Mr. Richard Turpin have taken the chair at a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon. Some supposed he took over the paper out of pure megalomania, to show that he could do it if he chose, just as he had done a thousand other incongruous odd jobs in the worlds of sedentary and active affairs.

"Fancy my strutting up and down this quarter-deck, with a pair of corsets buckled over my belly," he observed one day with a melancholy roar. We did our best to look sympathetic.

Katherine Mansfield, the late Claud Lovat Fraser—that charming artist of *The Beggars' Opera* and of how many pictures and illustrated books which are now fought for by connoisseurs!—Middleton Murry and Lady Jones—then Miss Enid Bagnold, the author of *The Happy Foreigner* and *A Diary without Dates*—certainly raised the level of *Hearth and Home* a little above mediocrity. But in doing so I believe they killed it. The dog was too old, his constitution too feeble for him to be rejuvenated all upon the instant by this terribly sudden infusion of pints of new blood, upon the prescription of the jaguar-doctor.

I have said that I was exultant at obtaining a post upon this influential organ. When created dramatic critic—an honour equivalent to being knighted in the field after some

well-fought and long drawn out contest—I suspected that a lurking Nemesis might balance these successes with some future set-back. Nor were my ill-boding fancies unjustified, as the issue was to prove.

I had met a gentleman named, I think, Welland, in “Dan” Rider’s bookshop, and Rider had introduced him to me as a dramatic critic. I inquired his address, in Bloomsbury somewhere, being willing to obtain practical advice from one of the Masters. I found him sitting, as authors are fond of sitting when interviewers arrive, “at a plain deal table covered with a litter of papers.”

“Dramatic critic?” he inquired. “What paper?”

“*Hearth and Home*, just taken on by Frank Harris, you know.”

The effect of this announcement was magical. Welland had leapt to his feet, seized hat and stick, was already through the hall door and out into the street. I pursued the fugitive and overtook him, and we never fell below a ploughman’s trot until we had reached the office of the great weekly in Chancery Lane.

“Frank Harris,” said Welland, “asked *me* to do the dramatic criticism for *Hearth and Home*, only yesterday at teatime. By George! I’m not to be made a dupe of like this! *He shan’t play hanky-panky with me!*”

This information was not reassuring. But there is always something interesting in watching anybody in a towering passion, when one does not happen to be oneself the object that has provoked it. I fell to studying Mr. Welland’s

animated features with the same intrigued detachment with which I might have beheld a beautiful sunset over Wimbledon Common, or such a lesser phenomenon of Nature as a "horse down." He was received into the sanctum, and I imagine the interview was stormy.

"You only imagine?" the reader may be tempted to inquire.

Positively yes. I am by no means certain. No creature ever breathed who was more subtly plausible than Mr. Frank Harris, when he thought it worth his while to take the trouble. Had he found himself in the predicament of that ready wit who leapt from bed exclaiming, "Don't shoot, Colonel, I can explain all," Harris *would* have explained all, and would have induced the Colonel to ask him to lunch, to stand him a bottle of Burgundy, and to take out a year's subscription to *Hearth and Home*. . . .

"I am throwing it down," cried Welland, re-emerging.

"But look here, you know, if you were offered this job *first*"—I searched for words and found only clichés—"I don't want to shoot my neighbour's bird," I concluded lamely.

"Oh, that's all right," he answered. "If I can give you any assistance, mind you look me up; you know where to find me;" and, with this really chivalrous offer, he took his departure.

Frank Harris now opened the door and beckoned me into the office. He was a trifle below the average height—I have heard him stigmatize the Rembrandt conception



of the Saviour as "too tall"—he was square-built, thickset, he had the air of a man of intense vitality, physical, intellectual and emotional. One soon realized that he carefully cultivated, and managed, the deep bass notes of his voice for effect.

"Why did you take your enemy into your confidence?" inquired the Voice.

Instead of replying, I found myself mentally quoting Feste from *Twelfth Night*, "Your ladyship must allow 'Vox.'"

"I must pull myself together," thought I, but succeeded only in remembering one more quotation—

Hear the far-off curfew sound  
Over some wide-watered shore,  
Swinging slow with sullen roar.

"Why did you make your enemy your confidant in this matter of doing dramatic criticism for me?" And in Frank Harris's voice the vitality of the Minotaur blent oddly with a disillusionment above that of the ghost in *Hamlet*.

I explained that Welland, upon the whole, had shown himself rather a good fellow; that I had looked him up for a little practical advice, and at that time had not the faintest notion that he was in any way connected with *Hearth and Home*.

"But he's your *rival*," asseverated the Great Man in a tone to which the kettle drum was as much a treble as the skylark's trill.

I was altogether too raw in the world to suggest that the



fact of his being my rival demanded itself some trifling explanation. Besides, the conclusion "But he's your rival" was, strictly speaking, a *non sequitur*. Yet what are *non sequiturs* when you have tumbled neck and crop into a story by Edgar Allan Poe?

A ring at the telephone cut short the interview. I gathered that some literary offer was being made him which Harris did not find pecuniarily alluring.

"No bun—no bear!" cried he with a decisive roar, and immediately replaced the receiver.

Harris, like all good Londoners, retired late to rest, and rose late of a morning. It was seldom before eleven, more often 11.30, when he entered the office, and as he crossed the door-mat the quiet undercurrent of conversation froze instantaneously. His personality could penetrate brick walls, and when a man who knew him well compared him, on this account, with Julius Cæsar, I promise you, I found nothing laughable in the parallel. Yet he achieved his curious ascendancy without effort, a little management of the voice, no doubt, but otherwise nothing—no posing, no pomposity, no fussy attempts to "keep up dignity."

One afternoon I had come in after interviewing Sarah Bernhardt, who in one of those "last appearances," had been playing in a scene from Hugo's *Lucrèce Borgia* at the Coliseum. She was then so old that she had to be assisted to rise from the couch on which she was sitting, but her voice was thrilling, her eyes flashing and magnificent. Hugh

Kingsmill, if I remember right, had been invading the rural fastnesses of Mr. G. K. Chesterton. This was flying at big game. The bags were full, so, finding ourselves alone in the office, we proceeded to dance a war dance. The door opened and there was visible the "shadow at the door," a very palpable shadow, Mr. Frank Harris. He looked back over his shoulder and beckoned little Rider.

"Dan! Look what I find them doing, these Oxford boys—dancing."

Then, seizing his right ankle firmly in his hand, he suited the action to the words, and gave a very creditable imitation of the step, skipping up and down the office, agile as a mountain goat.

And once, I remember, when business was slack, he called us all into his sanctum, and narrated the veracious history of the pretty farmer's wife, and the poor commercial traveller, the enraged farmer and the Bible and the dog Ponto—details of which I refrain from recording, because I understand they have since appeared in a "printed book."

One afternoon he took Rider, Hugh and myself for a magnificent run about Hampstead Heath in his car.

"I've got to sell her to-morrow," he said, "so we'll make her rip and get all we can out of her to-day." The afternoon was superb, the weather cool and keen, a high breeze blowing, a flood of sunshine.

We looked in for tea either at the "Spaniards" or "Jack Straw's Castle," I am not quite certain which, and within a moment a dispute had arisen. Harris wished to have tea

in the garden, the landlord insisted that we should have it indoors. Harris was volcanic.

"There!" cried he, shaking his forefinger in the very face of the fat, florid and phlegmatic innkeeper, "There you may read the Saxon Soul! There you may see all England as in a microcosm! A symbol! Beef, brawn, beer, belly—but NO BRAIN!"

The innkeeper's jaw dropped. He stared speechless, his mouth wide open, his shoulders against a wall.

Dan Rider, who had witnessed the discharge of this dreadful broadside, felt bound, out of loyalty to his chief, to bring a small swivel-gun into action. The piece was primed and loaded, and Dan, the gunner, stood by with the lintstock.

"What did you weigh, Boss," he inquired tenderly, "*last* Agricultural Show?" But no further damage was registered. The process of being broken limb by limb upon the wheel did not, some theorists maintain, cause the victim agony after the first stroke of the executioner, for from that moment the entire nervous system had been dislocated by shock. Something of the same nature may have befallen mine Host. We all filed out after Frank Harris, each striving not to be the last—in apprehension of reprisals. As we regained the car, I turned and looked back. He was still there, poor honest fellow. His shoulders were still pressed back against the wall. His mouth was still open. He had been called a "Symbol" and a "Microcosm." I wonder—did he ever rally? Or did he dwindle and smile weakly upon those who once had loved him? Did he droop with

the first autumn leaf, or the earliest snowdrop, or whatever it is they do droop with? I must get into touch with little Rider again. He is such a good-hearted little fellow, he would bring flowers to the grave. That anæmic stylist Dumas fils would have proffered camelias, Rider a rhododendron. I prefer the English tribute. I must get into touch again with little Rider. . . .

As we raced back across the Heath by twilight, a lady, the "sweet disorder" of whose dress would have commended itself both to Herrick and Ben Jonson, smiled broadly upon "Frankie" from a rustic bench whereon she lay reclined.

"Legs!" bellowed the author of *The Man Shakespeare*, from the very surplusage of his joy in living, "Legs!" There was always something of the primitive Pan in "Frankie"—the real Pan unregenerate; not to be civilized by bricks and mortar, or dress ties or offices. Such a divinity, of Woodland and Wall Street, would have better suited the brush of Peter Paul Rubens than that of Watteau or of Fragonard. Frank Harris would have horrified Queen Victoria, but I suspect he would have enchanted the "Virgin Queen."

"Hoity-toity, Master Harris," she would have observed coyly, "you are talking to a Virgin."

And "That is no fault of mine, Madam," "Frankie" would have made answer with his most engaging bellow.

In spite of his astonishing vocabulary—he spoke with the freedom of Defoe or Smollett, and never made use of a *double entendre*—he was very popular with ladies of all classes. Women generally detest a man who is tame, because—despite



specious appearances—very few of them are tame themselves. Harris had not had the advantage of a public-school education which aims at eradicating every trace of moral courage in youth lest the quality might survive to trouble the future citizen. A sickly dread of a “crank” is the characteristic by which the typical “old boy” may be detected, a “crank” being, of course, anybody of any originality whatsoever, from Christopher Columbus to the man who rolls his own cigarettes.

Harris at least was “not like the others”—a good point always where ladies are concerned. I remember coming upon a group of damsels in the drawing-room of the Authors’ Club. They were engaged in the pious task of entertaining Pan to afternoon tea. Guests and clubmen were dotted about writing letters, flirting, reading the *Sketch* and *Tatler*, or doing the heavy polite and handing tea-cake. “Frankie” did not sense this delicate atmosphere. He was no moral seismograph. He was propounding, reasonably, sonorously, some dark physiological theory to account for the fact that Shakespeare never really hit it off in the days when he was sharing the “Dark Lady’s” favours with the other Elizabethans. His adorers, endeavouring to look emancipated, succeeded only in appearing sea-sick. Every one else displayed symptoms of the painful emotion of terror. Oh that Max Beerbohm could have beheld the scene—or Bateman—to render it pictorially!

Frank Harris’s antipathy to England and the English has been stigmatized by Mr. Arnold Bennett as “a dreary



monomania." But he may have the unquestioned right of all foreigners to dislike us—or again he may not—for certain it is that nobody has yet proved him to be either extraneous or native. He once told me a story of how he discovered a suicide lying under a bush at Monte Carlo. Despite the purity of his accent in French, the authorities guessed Harris to be English—because he was so honest as to hand over the dead man's revolver instead of simply pocketing it. Good, they guessed him to be English. But he did not tell me if these authorities had divined his nationality correctly. Many claims have been put forward for Wales. It is not true that he distinguished himself as a youngster at Eton College. His early manhood he passed "out West" in a variety of pleasing occupations, lassoing steers—one of which he very wisely shot, on discovering it to be mad—and studying anarchist propaganda in the original German. Anon he would read William Morris as a scholarly alternative to the attractions of breaking in horses. Sometimes he would repair the subaqueous defects of bridges with the assistance of the diving-bell. At other seasons, while voyaging as a commercial traveller, he would amaze a comrade upon the journey by his relish for Swinburne's "Atlanta in Calydon." These and kindred pastimes occupied his tenderer years.

Before the late war, several countries were endeavouring to establish a claim to him. To-day these coy communities disclaim responsibility. Each is trying to "wish him" upon its neighbour.

But if he possesses some of the demerits of that Renaissance swashbuckler, Benvenuto Cellini, he possesses, with that earlier artist, real ability, when at his best, in the craft which he professes. Hugh Kingsmill remarked in his composite character a temperamental combination of pity for himself with a capacity to make trouble for anyone causing this self-pity. He suggested, I remember, a typical sentence for a Harrisian autobiography compiled from the Cellinian angle of thought—"I leapt upon him, thrust him to the ground, and plunged my dagger six times through his person, asking the while how he could use me so cruelly."

But to return to his merits as a craftsman. *Elder Conklin* and *Montes the Matador* were proclaimed by both Meredith and Theodore Watts-Dunton the greatest short stories in the language. This indeed is to be *laudatus a laudandis*. But candour compels me to admit that Watts-Dunton remained strangely unimpressed by the Harrisian theory which identifies Mary Fitton with the "Dark Lady of the Sonnets."

"Mary Fitton," Watts-Dunton once whispered to me, "was a blonde. Of that there can be no manner of doubt. But don't tell Mr. Harris that I say so—a very abusive man; a very abusive man!"

## CHAPTER II

"On with the Dance."

CHILDE HAROLD.

ONE of the jolliest parties I remember was organized by my brother, Maurice, who had edited the volume of Chatterton for the Clarendon Press. I shall not be suspected of partiality by those acquainted with that work, if I suggest that in making choice of him to do it the late Sir Walter Raleigh exhibited his usual acumen. The introductory memoir displayed the penetrating discernment of a born critic together with the practical knowledge of human nature which one associates less with the scholar than the man of affairs.

The dance was to take place at the Chelsea Town Hall, and every guest was to present some character typical of a circus. An amateur boxer of vast proportions who had acquired the noble art under that king of the older professors, "Jerry" Driscoll, was there as the strong man of the fair, arm-in-arm with a snakecharmer. Daisy Palmer, secretary to a Boanerges amongst Shakespeare critics, appeared as Peter Pan, wisely arguing that as Peter never grew up he would clearly not outlive a youthful fondness for circuses.

The lady etcher to whom Chelsea gave the pseudonym of "Curly" made a captivating ballet girl in crimson silk. Allen—a youthful phenomenon, a library cormorant and leviathan for old prints, and later appointed to some post at the Ashmolean—presented an Hellenic Patron of the Games. He had draped himself in a dust sheet new-bought at Tully's, and the nicest regard had been displayed for the elegance of the hanging folds. A delicate creation, yet it had one fault—everything seemed to hang from a brooch upon the left shoulder. This trinket was set with the largest sapphire I have ever seen before or since, a gem which must have cost the price of a whole dinner complete from cocktail to liqueur, when first secured by this youthful Rothschild at the Caledonian Market.

"I don't like to see a man wearing jewels!" said a little model who had posed for Havard Thomas, Rodin and Augustus John.

"No?"

"No. I think that stone would look nicer on me."

And she there and then removed it. Allen made a dash for the emergency exit, involved his ankles in the dust sheet, tripped and fell. Still he was not all unclad. Appearances were preserved. He retained two garments, a sandal and a signet ring, when he left the hall.

"Not very 'nice to know,' these Biblical characters," was the general impression. It was carelessly assumed that he was Joseph, the model, Mrs. Potiphar, and that they had had some slight misunderstanding while watching the Games.

In consideration of a bribe the unhappy Greek was accommodated with trousers and overcoat from the cloakroom—garments less elegant but also less treacherous than the chiton, and better adapted to the “climate of London.”

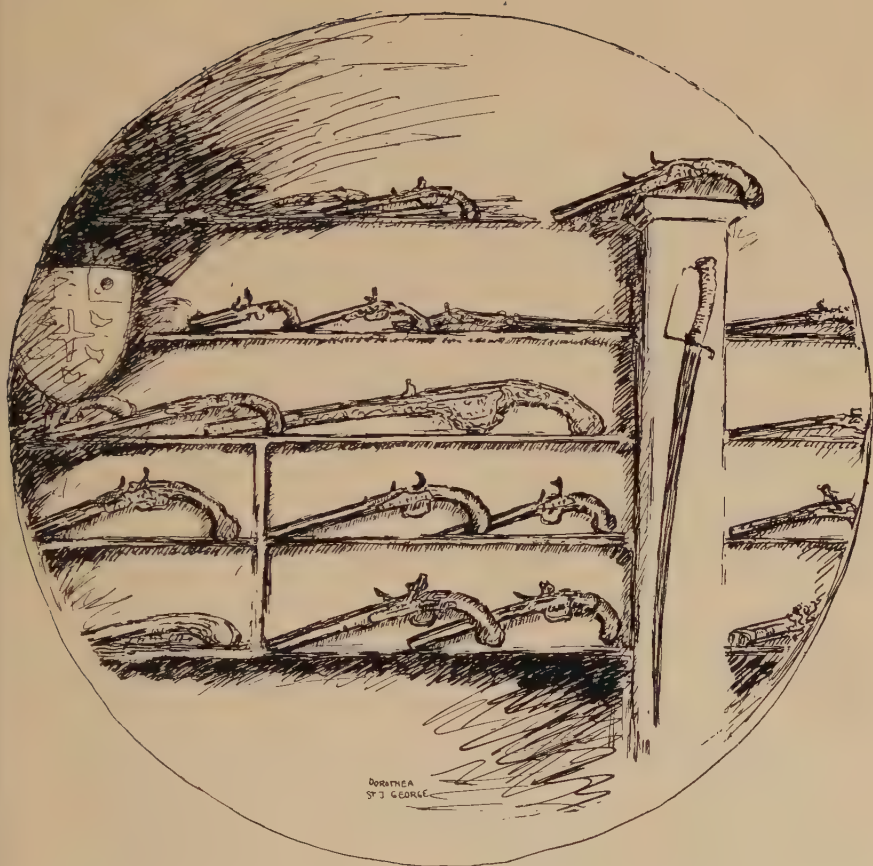
The band was Pritchard's, noted for spirit and vivacity. But when the interval between dances appeared unduly protracted, in the view of the more restless spirits, a chorus of amateur glee-singers would remind the orchestra of the flight of Time by improvised versions of those classic ditties, “Three Blind Mice” or “Who killed Cock Robin?”

A famous musical critic was universally voted as giving the star turn of the evening. Mr. Edwin Evans, unwilling to remove the patriarchal beard, cut the Gordian knot by coming as the “Bearded Lady.”

St. John's Wood no less than Chelsea does this sort of thing rather well—though it does not do to tell them so. But I am a broad-minded Guelph and see good even in those sacred Ghibellines. One of the most entertaining studio rags I was ever present at took place in the Ghibelline quarter, in Hugh Pollard's studio. Invitations were embellished with a sinister skull and crossbones, but there was a reassuring footnote “Lashings of Rum.” Guests were to come as pirates, but as this was not to be a bachelor party every “salt water thief” might bring a “victim,” or victims, in any costume later than Eve's.

Mrs. Hugh Pollard has a genius for making an evening go with a swing, and no one has ever known a dull moment under her roof, while, as Hugh Pollard is—amongst other





*. . . the most famous private collection  
of pistols in England . . .*



things—the *Country Life* authority on matters of food and drink, the renowned Monsieur Brillat Savarin, although a magistrate, might have been content to sail under so gastronomic a desperado.

The model's gallery had been converted into the after-hold of a seventeenth-century galley. Battle-lanterns gleamed in the corners; cross-beams served as spars to a complex rigging. The collection of old pistols—for Pollard, who is Adviser on Pistols to the Imperial War Museum, possesses the most famous private collection of pistols in England—showed bravely in this old-world staging, while new polished brass, and the silver of sword hilts, made gallant glitter.

The floor could hold forty couples, but at least as many more were distributed about the house. A villainous-looking crew! There was none of the regular *costumier's* stuff, all was artistic improvisation. Stacey Aumonier, with greasy forelock, made a saturnine buccaneer.

Cecil King, the artist historian of sea-craft, who did much of the work for the Zeebrugge pageant at Wembley, presented a much-battered pirate captain, home from the Caribbees. He looked singularly unprosperous. He was a mass of black rags, menacing, dirty, and disgruntled beyond description, but he was admirably in the picture.

In the small hours came journalists, less heavily disguised in bandannas and sashes. Shy members of the *corps diplomatique* ventured timorously upon hot rum grog, found it seductively good, and ventured again less timorously. It

was dished out in tin pannikins by the ship's cook, his arms blue with tattooing.

The cutlasses proved a temptation to swordsmen, and a bout with edged blades, by two of the finest exponents of the art in Europe, provided an unrehearsed interlude between the dances, which was packed with thrills.

One of His Majesty's Judges, who should have been communicating with Scotland Yard—or perhaps the Thames Conservancy—was perched upon a powder-barrel in the fo'c'sle drinking grog. A Master of fox-hounds was doing his best to monopolize Miss May Sinclair. The man who staked the next claim to the great Keeley Mine in Canada was dancing with Gladys Peto. Erskine Morrison, now President of the Cambridge University Boat Club, applied himself whole-heartedly to the rum ration, thanking Heaven piously that he was not in training. After Bacchus, Venus. He proceeded to fox-trot with a most ravishing little Spanish captive new-brought from Havana. Baroness Ledebøer with a débutante daughter, leading scientists, Fellows of learned societies, artists, men of letters, publishers, Olympic Champions—and for the rhythm of this sentence I had well-nigh added, murderers and Rural Deans—took service aboard. “What has Night to do with Sleep?”

“The curse of Chelsea,” says Hugh Pollard, who as a champion of St. John's Wood is not to be taken seriously, “is that there is so much more of the *petit-maitre* than the *cher maitre* about it.” On the other hand, he has generously



THE STUDIO PARTY





recognised the superior antiquity of “The Village.” It was he who first identified Lot’s Road with the locality where Lot’s Wife was turned into a pillar of salt. But he is difficult to please. He maintains that there is too much inbreeding between studios. “It may not show itself,” he will tell you, “like goître among the Swiss, but it is noticeable when you look at modern Hebrew art inspired by the Academy Schools. The L.C.C. turned down,” says he, “the suggestion that the students should be allowed to spoil the nice white walls of the new building, not so much because of the drawings submitted, as from an inspired distrust of circumscribed art based on the Semitic inspiration.”

“Did you say circumscribed ? ” queried one Councillor of another, in the County Hall passages, after the meeting of the Sub-Committee.

“Yes,” answered his friend, “it’s near enough. Have you ever been to a sale at Christie’s ? ”

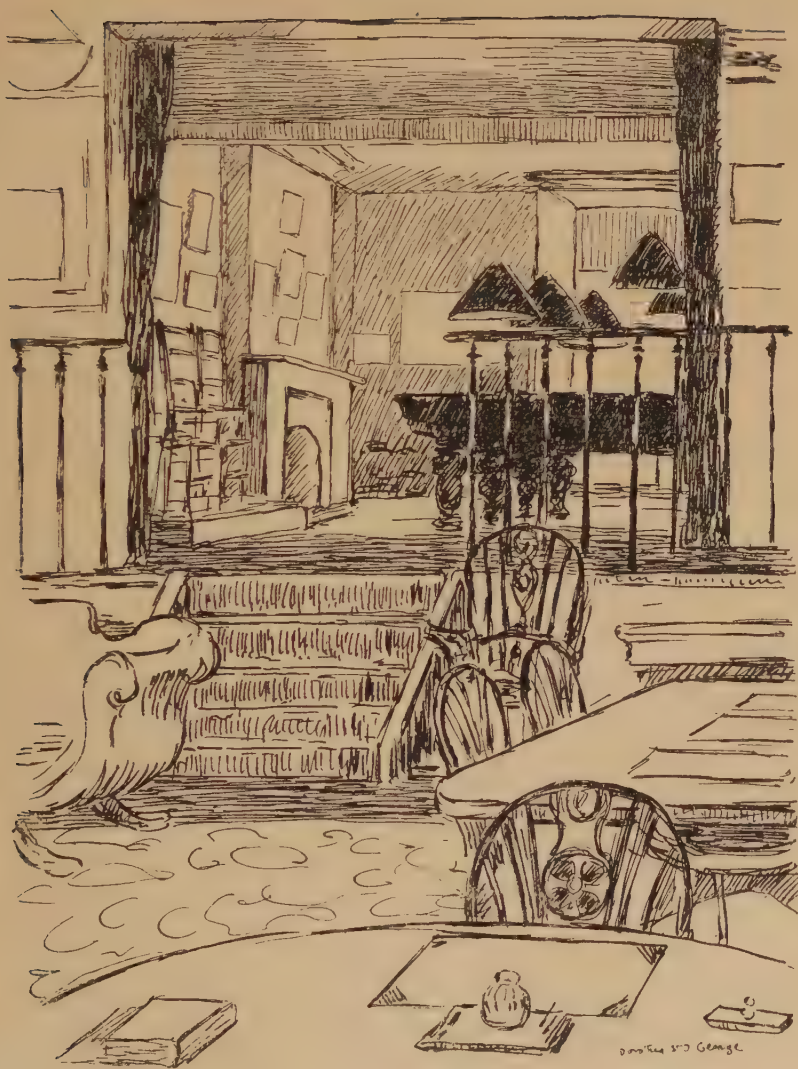
There was a terrific clatter outside “Curly’s ” studio, which, being bounded on south, west and east by night-garages, and stables where horses besotted by insomnia neighed and pranced, was deaf to all ordinary sounds. It heralded the arrival of the Fleet Street brigade, *Daily Express* contingent.

Hugh Pollard had just arrived from Mexico, whence he had been reporting the progress of a revolution, which I have sometimes suspected him of fomenting for the purposes of effecting a journalistic *coup*. Great events had been marking their usual “epoch.” Alan Ostler had attained

temporary international fame by being illegally arrested by the Germans at Agadir. What could befall a War Correspondent more happily? His became a political issue at once. He was given a special dinner by the British Fleet at Gibraltar. Ostler was not an Englishman but a Yorkshireman—however, he wrote admirable English. Meanwhile in some other quarter of the world, as the result of some other brawl, President Diaz was unseated. I have not the South American *Who's Who in Revolution*, so spare you details of President Diaz. And the truth is such matters are hardly my "field." I take politics only medicinally as a cure for occasional attacks of insomnia.

One thing, however, struck me very forcibly, my friend Pollard had got a new car out of the disturbance. It was incapable, I imagine, of any speed below forty miles an hour, and destitute of all such impediments as mudguards and screens. In a recess at the back, and keeping wonderfully cool, like the Angel in the Quadriga monument on Constitution Hill, sat Douglas Jerrold, ex-President of the Oxford Union, and the wittiest man of his year—a tall, elegant, silent, sinister figure, like Mephistopheles in disguise as my Lord Chesterfield. He was then joint editor with Pollard of the *Oxford Fortnightly*, which boasted W. L. George upon its staff. They brought with them a conscious air of wild places and, what was a thousand times more to the point, a hamper of mixed bottles.

De Bourguignon, that inspired pianist, who is at present mystifying the Japanese with his compositions, welcomed the



THE ST. JOHN'S WOOD ART CLUB





banditti with a burst of spoof Arabian music, which suggested the Dog's Home at Battersea defying a demon cat.

It was an unhappy moment for that cosmopolitan critic whom let us designate as Bentivoglio. Some one had called upon the author to recite.

"Get some one else to do it," cried Henry Simpson, President of the Poets' Club; "you know, Bard, you recite like a stockbroker winding up a business meeting!"

"Let *me* give it, Bard, you know you can't recite—you'll only ruin it. I'll do it oceans better and make them see all its beauties!"

Bentivoglio is easily elated and easily depressed. He proceeds to declaim with real feeling, an admirable sense of rhythm and a lavish wealth of gesture which, in his case, is not inspired by affectation:

The nobles keep their wealth of old  
And live as full of silk and gold, etc.

"How did I give it?"

Bentivoglio was mopping his sweating forehead upon an expensive bandanna. His tones were those of one greedy for honeycake.

"Damnably! Oh, damnably!" came the prompt answer. "It was torture, worse than death—worse than hell itself, wasn't it, everybody? Consider yourself in disgrace, Ben! Don't you dare to let it happen again!"

Then as the hapless critic stalked to his seat with that air of "You are idle, shallow creatures, not of my element," his speed was accelerated by a volley of nuts and oranges.

"The look of offended dignity alone was worth the money!" observed somebody with an air of detached rapture.

"Gambetta statue, what?" from young Havard Thomas, the sculptor.

"Joan of Arc at the stake?" suggested a journalist with an inflamed imagination.

"I think he does it uncommonly well," put in a chivalrous stranger.

"Yes, he *does* do it cleverly," cried "Curly," as though exhibiting a monkey or rare parakeet. "You do it very nicely, Ben, do you hear *that*? Aren't some people sarcastic? it's a *shame!* *That* should *learn* the 'Bard' to write lyrics!"

The truth is, Bentivoglio has a leg which was just created for pulling; nothing will cure him but total amputation or the grave. And here I really cannot refrain from recording an incident which occurred within the first few weeks of the outbreak of the Great War. Bentivoglio had the best of reasons for showing no indecent alacrity in joining up. Some of his ancestors were Prussians, others were Turks, while the name presumably had been bestowed upon him in honour of some Italian relation and the policy of Italy at the moment was tortuous and involved. But Hugh Pollard was in no mood for subtleties, refinements, finessing, or for what an ancient writer calls "the sophistical quirkes of heretiques." He had been contributing vitriolic articles to the *Daily Express*, and could not readily emerge from the war atmosphere. Vainly did we try to soothe him. Vainly did we urge the man

to consider that though the Hohenzollerns might conceivably have bombarded St. John's Wood, Chelsea was as yet intact, and victualled and even vinous. "Be moved," we cried, "be moved." It was rhetoric thrown away; we abandoned Bentivoglio to his fate.

"You haven't joined up? Why? You came to *our* public schools——!"

"*Only* one of them," hazards the wretched Ben.

"Nonsense! Subterfuges! Jesuitism! You came to *our* universities——!"

"*Only* one," almost shrieks the poor little fellow, who is being flogged into hysteria with words.

"You get the *very best* which *England* has to offer you!"

"But I do *pay* for it! Nobody ever gives me anything for nothing any more than——"

"God! *did* you hear that! He comes to *our* public schools ——!"

"No! no! Pollard!" from the company. "Not again!"

In short he left the little fellow a complete wreck, a personified Misery, an artist's model for "Gentleman contemplating Suicide."

A week elapsed. The same company had forgathered. During a lull in the conversation Bentivoglio enters dramatically, and strikes a statuesque pose. Perhaps he had been to see *The Daughter of the Regiment* at the "Old Vic." In any case I do not deceive myself as to the *ipsissima verba*.

"Boys! I've joined up!"

A bored silence. Nobody even faintly interested. At last Hugh Kingsmill, recumbent upon a settee :

" Oh ? Which side ? " -

Charles G. D. Roberts was persuaded to give us a reading of one of his poems. The reputation which he enjoys as a writer of animal stories, in a prose which is at once nervous and exquisite, has retarded his winning of those laurels which are undoubtedly due to him as a composer of really beautiful and classically perfect lyrics. He read from the depths of an arm-chair, scrutinizing the envelope on which his notes were scribbled, through those pince-nez of his, the lenses of which never seem by any chance to lie in the same plane.

It is a tradition that in his early days the great Swinburne acclaimed Roberts the " Father of Canadian Poetry "—but why Canadian, one feels tempted to ask, since the only Canadians who now know him by sight are such as haunt Brighton or Shaftesbury Avenue ? His knowledge of Canadian wild Nature is a legacy to him from his boyhood in the Dominion. It wells up from the sub-conscious, but I first met him at The Pines, Putney, in Watts-Dunton's lifetime, and he is still in England ! I would suggest as an alternative title the " Father of Shaftesbury Avenue." His heart is large. I imagine he detests formal recitations, for—on the rare occasions when his friends can persuade him—he always reads his poetry. Nobody has ever seen him " take the stage " and hold forth.

" I dreamed that poem," he told me afterwards, " and I was so pleased with it that I fell asleep thinking of it, and

dreamt the whole thing again." The poem had a beauty as of dreams about it. No need to doubt the artistic sincerity of Charles G. D. Roberts. His first animal story he rewrote six times, so as to confer the greatest degree of polish upon it. He loves "finish" in writing. I have heard him commend not seldom the "jewelled prose" of Théophile Gautier. Another verse-dictum of his is, "I never write any poem unless the poem insists upon being written." An admirable rule which can never be too widely observed. It is the poems which insist upon being written that have vitality; the others—well, they are too often "fops got 'tween asleep and wake."

A diminutive damsel sharing the Master's arm-chair gazed up at him adoringly, the Master gazed down encouragingly, for "Charles G. D."—the mot is Pollard's—"studies the fauna of Canada and the Flora of Chelsea."

"Léon hasn't done a turn yet," cried somebody. "Hi! coloured chalks forward! Here you are, Cher Maître—a perfectly good blank wall! Give us a fresco."

"Francis" (de Bourguignon) and Ihley, the painter, carried the unresisting Léon forward, and placed him in a sitting posture upon the piano, with the chalks beside him on a dish. Léon is, of course, Léon de Smet, the still-life and portrait painter, a glorious colourist and, as many will maintain, very easily the most brilliant painter of the contemporary Flemish school. Work of his has been purchased by his native townsmen of Ghent for their permanent national collection, and he has been created Chevalier of the Order of



Léopold. At this time he had further acquired great local fame in "The Village" through an exhibition of his work at the Leicester Galleries, which contained brilliant portraits of John Galsworthy and George Bernard Shaw.

To-night, however, he was suffering from an unaccountable mood of black depression. He scarcely touched the coloured chalks, and left the studio wall in its virgin state of coffee-colour relieved by smudgy yellow. As he appeared unable, at the moment, to exorcise the blue devils who lay siege to him, we returned him to the settee, propped him up with a cushion and a flagon, and besought George Carr of the Everyman Theatre to give us a musical interlude. Though connected with the theatre, and much esteemed by the late Sir Herbert Tree, George Carr is retiring. There is no joke about this. He never "comes forward." A mandoline was forced upon the stern and caustic-looking troubadour, who proceeded to vamp and warble traditional ditties :

Way down in Greenwich Village  
Where they live on love and spinach—

a tender idyl which being vociferously applauded he followed with a ballad in a more sombre key :

I'm lying in gaol with my face to the wall,  
A red-headed woman was the cause of it all—

And the company intoned the lamentable refrain :

Oh ! say how long !

Suddenly somebody exclaimed, "Léon has woken up !"

It was true. With his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets,

he advanced with gravity, and balanced upon his nose was the heaviest chair in the room, an honest trifle in Elizabethan oak secured with wooden stopples. Léon had regained his native gaiety—I had almost said his “Latin gaiety,” save that the French temperament, so far at least as the Anglo-Saxon can sense it in French literature, seems no gayer than his own. We have many words indicative of well-being and content for which the French language offers no equivalent—merry, jolly, bonny, and the North Country canny and sonsy—and it seems to me that we have the French words, such as gay and vivacious, exuberant and the like, as well. These words our language preserves presumably because they are necessary to us. Then look at our literature. What sunshine of common contentment is there in *The Canterbury Tales* and *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*! And surely not Rabelais himself has exceeded for sheer jollity such Elizabethan plays as *The Wild Goose Chase*, or *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*; and what about the drinking scene in *Twelfth Night* and the play scene in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*? Then there are such poems as Sackville’s “To all you Ladies now on Land,” and there is *The Beggars’ Opera* and *The Sentimental Journey* and *She stoops to Conquer*. No one thought the author of *Tom Jones* a depressing fellow, and *Pickwick* still finds readers. However, if the French find *Pickwick* a thought sombre and northern, they revel in the sunshine of Edgar Allan Poe.

If poverty can be viewed in a romantic light, the early history of few artists is more romantic than Léon’s. He

makes no secret of his youthful struggles before he had made a name in the world. When lamp oil ran out, he would fill the lamp with water, so that the dregs of the oil, floating upon the surface, could be counted upon to give light for another five or ten minutes. For one whole fortnight Madame de Smet, himself and the child, Marcel, subsisted upon a scanty ration of flour and water. The utmost ingenuity in the kitchen could not succeed in greatly varying this bill of fare. When the two weeks were over, "Léon," said Madame de Smet, "we cannot go on eating flour for ever. Take some of your pictures, set out for Ghent, and try to sell them at the Docks." So Léon tramped six miles with his canvases under his arm, fortified for his exertions by a fortnight's intensive training upon flour and water. At last Fortune seemed disposed to smile upon him. In the course of a long day he sold several important works—at a ridiculously low figure of course, but yet for ready cash, and he had the money, a good honest one hundred franc note, in his pocket.

On entering a wood which lay before him upon his way, he glanced back. Two hooligans were following. He recognized them at once for a couple who had been watching him down at the Docks at the moment when he was being paid for his paintings. Attempts to side-track them proved abortive, so at last, being no Hercules, he fairly took to his heels, and by dint of sheer running outdistanced them and gained the shelter of a small farmhouse. Here he rested himself, and coming to terms with a stout farm labourer persuaded him to act as bodyguard for the sum of three francs.

Thus escorted he reached home safely, but here a new difficulty arose. He had no small change from which to pay the three francs, and dared not parade the hundred-franc note before his new ally as proof of *bona fide*. The enemy was baffled, but it was a case of "preserve me from my friends." It was Charles V—that witty Emperor who had a hole made in the wall of his bedchamber upon the chapel side, for the purpose of attending Mass in bed—who swore that he would rather be followed into battle by a legion of devils than Swiss mercenaries. The devils, he said, he might put to rout by making the sign of the Cross, but a Switzer would only depart for ready cash.

The unhappy Léon could but promise reward upon an increased scale for the morrow, and he shut the farm labourer out. Having rid himself of his ally, he disclosed his gains to madame, and all was rejoicing in the small home circle.

There is a period a little before dawn when night is at its blackest, the air at its rawest, and human vitality at its lowest. At this season most old people die, and almost all suicides. The sun has not yet risen, the moon is going off duty, and at this hour the de Smets were awakened by a most appalling crash. They sat up in bed, bolt upright. But one explanation was possible. The two ruffians from the Docks had followed after all, and they were breaking in! Catching up a chair, Léon descended, determined to sell his life dearly. . . . It was nothing. A picture chain had given way, and the most heavily framed picture in the house was lying across the kitchen floor, amidst a litter of broken crockery.



The family rose early. A light supper does not always predispose to long slumbers. But this morning there was something to rise *for*. No more flour-and-water breakfasts ! To-day was to be a gala day !

Madame de Smet was tidying up the house. What was the baby playing with ? She gazed first nonchalantly, then with a veritable stare of horror. Marcel had appropriated the large cutting-out scissors, and was now distributing, as though they were confetti, the innumerable tiny fragments into which he had divided the hundred-franc note !

But Léon's luck had turned for all that. There was, however, just one moment when it seemed as though ill fortune had not yet done with him. He obtained a commission which required indeed all his vitality, but not that subtlety of eye and brain which connoisseurs were already beginning to remark in his work. *This* painting was to be of another type. Garbed in workman's overalls, and sitting in a "cradle," he was hoisted aloft in a cutting east wind to paint a work not yet exhibited in any academy, to wit, the whole sea-façade of one of the largest hotels in Ostend !

I forget what happened after the party in "Curly's" studio—no, I don't though, I remember we all went to the Crab Tree Club. The Crab Tree was the first of the great Bohemian night clubs. And I wish some one would attempt a repetition. There is so much dancing nowadays that, delightful though that is, no time is left over for talk. Understand me, I do not mean small-talk but *great talk*, mental





TO THE CRAB TREE CLUB



unbendings and divine, intellectual conversational orgies. "Shop" talk, where no apology for "shop" needs to be made, and verbal jousting such as may have burst out of old on the entrance of Shakespeare or Ben Jonson under the roof of the Mermaid. Men need talk and "shop" and arguments. Once when I was living in Belgium, Henry Simpson paid me a flying visit, and he stayed a week for the purpose of revelling with me in the delicious technicalities of *terza rima*.

No, there is no talk possible in the short interval of time between two fox-trots. Delicate *badinage*, pretty sparring, and some slight sparks at the most which resemble wit. One could argue and discuss to one's heart's content at the Crab Tree, but can one to-day at the Hambone, or the Gargoyle, or even at that merry Bullfrogs where the waiters bear so startling a resemblance to Mexican banditti? These places can be delightful. Each has its own atmosphere, but I ask myself whether the emotional element does not swamp the intellectual. There was dancing at the Crab Tree, of course, but there were far more individual "turns." One could keep pace with modern movements in music and poetry by recitals, which were frequently instructive, if occasionally comic.

The Crab Tree was planted by Augustus John, and the birds who perched upon its branches were all working fowls. One reached the premises by means of a narrow and crazy staircase, which led one to the superstructure of some shop in Greek Street, Soho. Artists have a way of frequenting groves and grottos and such queer places. In Town, where

grottos and groves are extremely rare, they tend to forgather in the oddest of forgotten corners. Such haunts as served the early Christians for their secret services would appear to be very suitable localities for the modern cabaret show. A tax of one shilling was levied by the Crab Tree upon such blatant beings as flaunted it in evening dress.

Augustus John ; Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska, the sculptors ; Brodsky ; Compton Mackenzie ; Stelling (" Mr. Gossip " of the *Sketch*) ; Gerald Cumberland, the author of *Set Down in Malice*—in fact, all the pick of Fleet Street were frequent visitors. Betty May, Billy Gordon, with many of the famous models of the day, and several famous actresses provided a feminine nucleus. The dancing stage was all that could be desired. Randall Cecil, son of Lord William Cecil, represented aristocracy. The Slade and South Kensington sent contingents of young people brimming over with animal spirits.

Views on art sometimes led to bitter physical conflict ; and, as there were four steep flights of narrow wooden stairs between this apartment and the landing below, the process of " chucking out " was lengthy though never tedious. Tournaments, however, were fought with due regard to the laws of chivalry. Bottles were not admitted as weapons, and the person of the pianist was sacred ; while, if the conflict grew to be general, the combatants were propelled towards the stair-head, where they might belabour themselves with an excess of pertinacity yet not interfere with the dancers.



Spelling 97 George

THE IMMORTAL AUGUSTUS  
AT THE CAFÉ ROYAL





## CHAPTER III

"Great men have been amongst us."

WORDSWORTH.

I OWE my introduction to the late Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton to Mr. Arnold Lunn, author of "*The Harrovians*," "*Loose Ends*," "*Roman Converts*" and much miscellaneous literature upon mountain craft and ski-ing. My most vivid recollection of him dates back to undergraduate days when, disguised as a bishop, he entered Buol's restaurant, called for a glass of milk, and sat hearkening to the backchat and contemplating with well-simulated horror those manifold symptoms of an opulent admiration which the presence of waitresses never fails to elicit from studious youth. By some chance or other his identity was established, but—as the eighteenth century would have phrased it—the frame of the athlete enabled the philosopher to make good his escape.

"The Pines" was a veritable palace of painting. There was a noble cabinet by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, depicting, on its panels, scenes from the life-story of St. George. There were Kelmscott first editions in quantity and crayon drawings

by Burne Jones and in particular, the famous "Venus Verticordia."

"Such delicacy," Watts-Dunton would murmur, "such marvellous delicacy of touch. You might think they were blown on to the paper. Those are," with conviction, "the finest chalks in the world!"

Watts-Dunton was the last survivor of that incomparable circle which included Swinburne, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris, Robert Browning, Whistler, Wilde, Burne Jones, Ford Madox Browne, Tennyson and others hardly less celebrated.

Watts-Dunton would vaunt Tennyson's "marvellous sensitiveness of ear" and would declare that "The Lotus Eaters" was composed in the most flawless Spenserians ever written since Spenser himself produced the "Faerie Queene."

"What of Keats's 'Agnes' Eve'?" I ventured to ask him.

"Its beauty is incomparable," Watts-Dunton exclaimed, with that noble enthusiasm which made his company so delightful, "but Keats does not move in that extremely difficult metre with the same natural ease as Tennyson. It is as though he had caught his rhymes in a net."

Watts-Dunton possessed what is claimed for many people, but seldom with such entire justice as in his case, "a genius for friendship." Wilde, however, he never really liked. He would contrast him and "Algernon"—Swinburne—as Hellenists, and, as will be imagined, Swinburne shone by the comparison. Wilde, Watts-Dunton seems

always to have regarded as "superficial" and a "terrible *poseur*."

Swinburne's knowledge of ancient Greek was only surpassed, so far as I could gather, by Pericles, Demosthenes and such experts by accident of time and place, and Watts-Dunton loved to tell one that his friend could read and write with ease in all the romance languages. That Swinburne could compose fluently, and in exigent metres, in modern French no less than in classical Greek and Latin is common knowledge. Nor did Watts-Dunton suffer one to forget Swinburne's title to fame as a critic; he was "as great a critic as he was a poet."

There was something really beautiful in the complete absence of egotism with which Watts-Dunton would listen to the praises showered upon the dead Swinburne by the younger fry of letters who haunted "The Pines." When people called it was to talk Swinburne, and in their reverence for that master, visitors were apt to forget that their host also—both as critic and poet—was not wholly to be ignored. Few men are sufficiently disinterested, men, I mean, of outstanding parts and talents, to listen with obvious delight when praises are showered upon their more famous friends. Watts-Dunton had no taint of that egotism which is so often urged as a reproach to men of letters.

It was piquant to us youngsters to hear Swinburne referred to as "Algernon," and the great Rossetti as "Gabriel." Classics with Christian names. The imagination boggles at the idea that Shakespeare was probably

plain "Bill" in the Mermaid and perhaps "Baby" or "You stupid boy" to Ann Hathaway! "Gabriel," I fancy, was almost Watts-Dunton's favourite of all that group. "Gabriel was always very interested in the work of the younger generation, and used to follow all the new movements in poetry and paint."

"Browning I was always meeting, for he was a confirmed diner-out. He was out, I believe, to dinner every night for two years. I was by way of being a diner-out myself, so we were continually running up against each other. He was such a clever fellow, Robert Browning, such a clever fellow!" And at this point Watts-Dunton would laugh to himself—a deep, low, appreciative chuckle, but at what recollection, evoked by his reminiscences, one never quite liked to ask him.

Watts-Dunton was profoundly learned. His knowledge of books, and of a thousand out-of-the-way subjects, was encyclopædic. But he was able to carry this gross burden of knowledge with consummate ease and grace of manner. His love of Society, of talk, of dining-out had given him what Boswell somewhere calls "a very pleasant air of the great world." His lyric "At the Mermaid," reprinted in the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, contains much of his personality—his fine sense of literary style, his love of the society of his fellows and of good living, his enthusiasm, his capacity for reverence, his scholarship, all are there. It is the most self-revealing lyric I know. Had Watts-Dunton been carried back in Time by some magic process, he would have





"THE PINES," PUTNEY HILL.

*Great men have been amongst us.*



made, one can swear to it, a typical and well-loved member of that Mermaid coterie. His was a very unaffected, a very real joy in living. It is no exaggeration to say that he carried his enthusiasm for beauty and for life to the very brink of the grave. I saw him only some two or three months before his death. He was then grown so feeble that he could not, save with visible effort, raise himself from his arm-chair. But when some one that same afternoon inquired with alarming simplicity "Do you like Keats?" his laughter at the infinite futility of such a question was such as to set all the company laughing in concert.

He severed his connection with "Jimmy"—Whistler—owing to what he considered the unchivalrous conduct of the latter towards "Algernon." Whistler, if I understood him aright, pestered Watts-Dunton to induce Swinburne, who was now at the climax of his fame by reason of the vogue of *Poems and Ballads*, to write an article upon his personal art. Watts-Dunton hesitated to ask this favour of Swinburne, whose time was then extremely taken up; but he did so at last, and "Algernon" yielded to the pressure put upon him by his old friend. Swinburne's criticism, though courteous and capable, was not sufficiently laudatory to please the exigent painter. Whistler's acknowledgment of Swinburne's kindness was made in a letter to the *Times*, in which he reproached him for not confining himself to his own art of poetry and stigmatized him as "outsider—Putney." From that time Watts-Dunton not unnaturally ceased to regard himself as Whistler's friend, nor did he respond to the challenge

of several years later when, having tacked on the name of Dunton to the Watts—he had previously styled himself Theodore Watts—he received this sprightly telegram from “Jimmy”: “Theodore, What’s Dunton?” Loyalty to Algernon forbade. It would not do. And yet—“Such an amusing fellow, Jimmy, such an amusing fellow!”

He was a fearless yet a courteous critic, Watts-Dunton, a profound scholar and a poet, and though what is called “a man of the world,” yet a loyal friend and a chivalrous gentleman.

Mr. Charles Garvice I remember having once tempted with guileful talk. He was washing in the lavatory of the Authors’ Club. His frock-coat was neatly laid aside. His tall hat, meticulously polished, stood upon the glass slab at a just distance between two bundles of face towels.

“It must feel rather odd, sir,” said I, “to feel that you have more power, through your novels, than the King, the House of Lords and the House of Commons put together.”

“You get used to it,” said he.

I remember him also at a dinner given in Town to celebrate I know not what anniversary of the Oxford magazine, the *Isis*. Everybody present had been connected with that publication, if merely as occasional contributor, except Mr. Charles Garvice, who, I suppose, had arrived as the guest of some old stager who had been connected with the *Isis* at an earlier day.

The persons of guests are sacred, and Jove himself

protects the man who protects his guest. Monsieur Brillat Savarin endorses the view held by that earlier deity, and maintains that a host is responsible for the happiness of his guests, so long as they are beneath his roof. The gigantic Polyphemus modified, in his personal practice, this latter dictum. "Guests are responsible"—or so in effect he argued—"for the happiness of hosts, so long as they remain beneath their roofs." A certain humorous poet present at the *Isis* dinner—But you shall see how he acted; I spare you philosophy.

"Gentlemen!" he cried impressively, rising uncalled upon by the chairman and bumper in hand, "Gentlemen!"—his voice vibrated with emotion—"Gentlemen, I give you Mr. Charles Garvice. The only man present, gentlemen, who never contributed to the *Isis*, the only man present whose ambition is of so paltry, weak, and wholly negative a character as never once to have incited him to write for the *Isis*, and the sole man, it may be, in the universal world, whose contribution had it been all neatly penned, folded, put into an envelope, and despatched to the *Isis*, would most unhesitatingly have been rejected by the *Isis*. Gentlemen! The toast of the evening! I give you Mr. Charles Garvice!"

The poet, exhausted by this rhapsody, drained his bumper and sank back into his chair. Not so Mr. Charles Garvice. Purple with rage, he leapt to his feet and charged like a bull, but he was restrained from bodily attack by the overmastering force of a whole posse of his fellow-diners. He was calmed eventually, but it took quite a long time. The



ruffled feelings of the author of "The Maid Of Tooting Beck"—he *did* write that one, didn't he?—were soothed and flattered, and doubtless they all lived happily ever afterwards.

Mr. Bernard Shaw I remember at a debate at the "Tomorrow Club," where he gave us a lecture on the origin of drama—the most original lecture I have ever heard. He spoke for an hour and twenty minutes without a break, yet I believe had the whole speech been printed verbatim, it would have read correctly as a fluent and finished composition. Mr. Shaw talks as he writes, simply, rhythmically, lucidly. His language is never elaborate, he attempts no striking word-music, no architecture of phrases. He belongs essentially to that great school of simple prose writers of which John Dryden, with his play prefaces and critical essays, was the first exponent in our language. To this school Defoe and Dean Swift likewise belong. Mr. Shaw remains, in our day, its most notable representative.

We learned with some astonishment that Mr. Shaw advocated the "Unities"—Goethe, one remembers, did not—and maintained that the dramatic interest grew tenser or weaker as these were adhered to or neglected. He maintained the superiority of the Greek dramatists over our own Elizabethans. In this attitude he was, I fancy, sincere, but it need hardly be said that he had the house against him. If the most desirable quality in a lecturer be to be stimulating, Mr. Shaw is certainly a lecturer in the very foremost rank.

A long, tumultuous debate followed. It was pointed out that the Greek dramatists were writers of limited scope—composers of comedy or of tragedy, who never ventured beyond their single provinces. The Elizabethans, on the other hand, were composers of tragedy *and* of comedy both, and not yet content with proving themselves masters in both arts, gave the world two new art forms, the “History” and the “Tragicomedy.”

The Greeks were regarded as the first inventors of the art of the drama. Waiving the possibility that they may have derived the germs of the art from forerunners—the history of Prehellenic times is vague—was it not true that *every* country discovered its own drama for itself? We English composed miracle plays in the days of our Plantagenet Kings. Those mediæval playwrights had so little in common with Euripides or Sophocles as to entitle them to be regarded not as successors to a tradition, but as pioneers. It was religion which in both cases had supplied the inspiration. From the playwrights of the Church, the playwrights of the people were derived.

The combination of humorous and tragic elements in close juxtaposition, where either serves to intensify the poignancy of the other, was instanced as a subtlety of the English Renaissance never attempted by a Greek of classical times. The scene when the Clown conveys the “worm” to the defeated Cleopatra, was cited as an example in point. A profounder interest in, and a more intimate knowledge of the psychology of the individual was likewise claimed for

the Elizabethans. Euripides was the "most modern" of the Greek dramatists. What character was there in Euripides which lived in the human imagination with the clear-cut individuality of Juliet's Nurse, of Falstaff, or Othello, or the great Duchess of Malfi? One conceded willingly enough the slipshod construction of Webster's tragedy, but it was startling to discover that Mr. Shaw was really blind to its many beauties.

The truth is, I fancy, that Mr. Shaw is deficient in a sense of the higher tone value of words. Were a passage from Young's "Night Thoughts"—that poem which is only blank verse by courtesy, because rhyme has been dispensed with—to be read to Mr. Shaw as the product of some minor Elizabethan much cried up by Mr. Gosse, I have a notion he would be completely gulled.

Perhaps a half-conscious realization of the fact that he really knows next to nothing about poetry is at the back of his obvious antipathy for poets. One dislikes so little that one understands. Which of his characters is it who says something to the effect that "poets turn the mother's milk into printers' ink"—yet if a poet by the inspiration he derives from a woman can produce children of the intellect no less than children of the flesh, surely that is all the more to his credit?

Besides, one is justified in the face of such an accusation in asking Mr. Shaw to what use *he* turns this much-belauded mother's milk? That we have yet to learn.

And then doesn't he say somewhere that "poets do not marry but grow old in lodgings petted by their landladies"?

What innocence of literary history does not such a statement reveal! Chaucer, "The Father of Modern English Poetry," married his Philippa. Spenser, that poet so typical of the fraternity as to have earned from the foremost of English literary critics the title of the "poet's poet," celebrated his marriage with Elizabeth Boyle in the grandest epithalamium in the language and became, it would appear, that rather tedious thing the "ideal husband." And so we come to Shakespeare, whose verse at its grandest is so distasteful to Mr. Shaw's shrinking sensitiveness of ear. He was, to return upon the old euphemism, "much married," for, besides his children by Ann Hathaway, there was also a cavalier poet, Sir William Davenant, the author of that charming trifle "The Lark now leaves his Wat'ry Nest," who was "contented enough," according to a gossipy tradition, "to be thought Shakespeare's son." And Davenant doubtless had better means of knowing than the scholiasts. His mother he believed to have been the landlady of the Crown, "a very beautiful woman of a good wit and conversation." This poetical son of a supremely poetical father married in his turn, but we should fill volumes were we to reckon up all the married poets whose number gives a complete refutation to Mr. Shaw's shallow aphorism. Ben Jonson, Shakespeare's friend and eulogizer, married, and so did the great epic poet of our race, *three times*. "It seemed to suit him," as I once heard a very odd old lady declare. Lack of humour



either broad or subtle handicapped John Milton in his pursuit of domestic bliss. If instead of writing divorce pamphlets upon his honeymoon, he had made his wife a present of whatever may have been the seventeenth-century equivalent of a Teddy Bear, how different his whole subsequent life-history might have been! But even so, it is unfortunate for Mr. Shaw that the poet should have risked matrimony *three times*, when he ought to have been "growing old in lodgings petted by his landlady"! But there are poets who have lived well into Mr. Shaw's lifetime upon whom he might have verified the truth of his theory before condescending to play the sophist. There was a Mrs. William Morris, for instance, whose portraits it is odd nobody should have shown Mr. Shaw since he gives "fine arts" as one of his "subjects" in "Who's Who in Literature." Robert Browning too must have lived almost if not quite into Mr. Shaw's lifetime—but, good heavens! we have come round again to another of these "ideal husbands"!

"Poets do not marry. . . ." In this petulant paradox there is but one grain of truth. Poets are governed by economic laws no less than other people. Money being necessary for marriage, and popular taste being what it is, it is probable that the average poet is more handicapped by the want of it than the average market gardener. But would Mr. Shaw, on that account, rate the market gardener as a higher and finer product of Nature than the poet? But I had forgotten his vegetarianism. He very probably does.

There is one thing, however, which pleases me very much



about Mr. Shaw's statement about poets not marrying, and that is that Mr. Shaw, as a married man, confesses thus publicly to being no poet. It is a relief to know that poetry is not one of his "subjects." When he seeks to portray a poet upon the stage, as he does in *Marchbanks*, for instance, what a holy hash he does make of it to be sure! A poet does not go about everywhere proclaiming himself a poet, amongst people who could not possibly understand him, not at least if he be as nervous and high strung as *Marchbanks* is represented to be. As a lover too he has no counterpart in real life, he is mere "studio work."

It is agony for this unimaginable young man to think of the woman he loves preparing a meal, to which he has every reason to believe he will himself be invited. The lady departs to the kitchen.

*Mrs. Morell.* "The onions."

*Marchbanks* [convulsively]. "Onions!" He hates likewise to see her filling the lamps.

*Marchbanks* [starting up in the wildest consternation]. "But that will soil her hands."

Since when was a lover plunged into this convulsive consternation on beholding his lady occupied about such household "chaws"? Would he not rather regard her activities as having something of fascination and witchcraft about them, when he sees *her* so occupied? Is it not a property of love to invest the surroundings of the loved one with an atmosphere of poetry, *her* street, *her* house, *her* window? A glimpse of his mistress busied about her house,

lighting lamps or preparing supper, has been seldom diagnosed as the cause of epilepsy in a lover.

No, Mr. Shaw does not "get it," and I fancied I could dimly divine the instinct which prompted a French lady present at the To-morrow Club debate, to exclaim in a disconcertingly penetrating *sotto voce*—" 'E 'ave a pairrson-alitee like an odious steel tube ! "

It is as a wit that Mr. Shaw will be remembered. He has been compared with Congreve, a Congreve who has somehow acquired—untoward development !—the " social conscience." Personally, I think Mr Shaw's wit as keen and more abundant than Congreve's, but he lacks Congreve's unfailing instinct for reality. An interesting comparison might perhaps be made between Lady Wishfort and Mrs. Warren, as psychological portraits of two highly entertaining, blackguardly old women. But Mr. Shaw has too many psychological lapses. His Marchbanks, as we have tried to show, is all wrong. And then there is *Fanny's First Play*. When Mrs. Knox in admonishing her daughter exclaims, " I hope you don't think yourself a heroine of romance," " Oh no," cries Margaret ; " I'm a heroine of reality if you call me a heroine at all."

Do the children of Free Church shopkeepers cap epigrams thus in the suburbs ?

Bluntschli, again, in "*Arms and the Man*." He has been accusing Raina of lying.

*Raina*. Do you know what you said just now ?

*Bluntschli*. I do.

*Raina* [gasping]. I ! I !!! [She points to herself

incredulously, meaning, "I, Raina Petkoff, tell lies!" He meets her gaze unflinchingly. She suddenly sits down beside him, and adds with a complete change of manner from the heroic to the familiar], "How did you find me out?"

But would Raina have spoken and acted thus? "Not," as the vulgar say, "upon a bet." It is one of the standard reproaches which Adam is for ever bringing against Eve, that she will bluff, quibble, procrastinate, do anything or say anything, rather than honestly admit that she was in the wrong. Congreve would not have made this mistake.

That Mr. Shaw is an extraordinary good citizen, is a point not so widely appreciated as one feels it should be. Thus it was no surprise to us that he should have cared to brave a cutting east wind to address, without a lecturer's fee, some thirty or forty young men and women in a small room some three landings up, when, with no additional effort, he might have made a little fortune by simply intimating his willingness to address, at a price, an audience in one of the larger lecturing halls.

And every artist alive owes Mr. Shaw a debt of gratitude for his cool, contemptuous exposure of the claptrap of the plausible Nordau, before a public gullible enough to take him seriously, in that admirable polemic, "The Sanity of Art."

But then, the devil of it is that when Mr. Shaw elects to speak of the master poets of the English Renaissance one wants some Nordau to expose Shaw. When Nordau speaks of the works of the great Florentine painters as "executed with the awkwardness of a learner," or refers casually to

their "general artistic incapacity," Mr. Shaw very reasonably observes, "to make any comment on these howlers would be to hit a man when he is down." But hear Shaw out—Nordau Nordau in his preface to *The Admirable Bashville*. "Marlowe never wrote a mighty line in his life."

Ben Jonson, the poet, asserted that he did. Mr. Shaw, the prose writer, nearly four centuries later, discovers that he did not. Ben Jonson in this matter is a specialist. He has written poetry. He knows. Mr. Shaw has only written *The Admirable Bashville*. Let me pursue a simile. The Harley Street doctor gives his considered judgment of a case. A gentleman who once did a first-aid job *and bungled it* disagrees with him. "Marlowe"—according to Mr. Shaw—"had only a common brain." This is at least as funny as anything in Nordau. Of Webster he says "the man was a fool." To comment upon such a dictum as *that* would not be like "hitting a man when he is down," it would be like stamping with hob-nailed boots upon his diaphragm. There is plenty more of this sort of stuff for whoever cares to read it, but the easy bumptiousness of the style soon grows provoking. "Blank verse," says Mr. Shaw, "is so childishly easy and expeditious . . ." and so far as this applies to Mr. Shaw's personal curvetings upon his Pegasus one is not disposed to differ. Come! Let us have a little of Mr. Shaw's blank verse! Perhaps it will cheer us up.

What are riches worth  
When wisdom with them comes to show the pursebearer  
That life remains unpurchasable?



What indeed? And what is the blank verse line worth which admits at its very outset so hideous an assonance as “wisdom” and “with them” and then follows it up with “purse-bearer” and “unpurchasable.” The assonances jingle like three-ha’p’orth of French nails in a carpenter’s bag. It is worse than the “Johnson-Thompson, Thompson-Johnson” of Beau Brummell.

Wiltstoken’s holy bell hearkening.

—verse or prose?—

Your unassailable social position.

I have sometimes wondered, *did* this line provide the inspiration for that war-time lyric of “Sister Susie’s sewing shirts for soldiers”?

My father was a very learned man.

But has Mr. Shaw then *no* conception that blank verse is not verse at all unless it has flow, lyricism, singing quality?

Th’ importunate clutching of no coward’s hand  
From wearied Nature Devastation’s secrets  
Doth wrest.

He is at it again with his sibilants. Stations—secrets. Such lines do not sing, they hiss like constipated serpents!

“Blank verse,” I refer again, dear Reader, to the preface to *The Admirable Bashville*, “is so childishly easy and expeditious . . . that by adopting it, I was enabled to do within the week what would have cost me a month in prose.” No doubt. Mr. Shaw’s prose is excellent. “A very easy week,” did I hear you say? Reader, I incline to agree



with you. Plenty of lying late a-bed in the mornings. Plenty of taking the dog out for walks, and an hour or so left over in the evenings for improving talks about Fabianism, vegetarianism, trades-unionism, poetry and kindred subjects. It cannot have taken him the whole mortal week of seven days to shout out to his typist such lines as

Hanover Square shuts off from Conduit Street  
and

I wish your ladyship good afternoon.

But No! No! No! I can't bear any more of it and no more can you. Let us have a little blank *verse* for a change from that great poet in whom Shaw-Nordau was the first to discover "only a common sort of brain."

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?—  
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.—  
Her lips suck forth my soul, see where it flees!—  
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.  
Here will I dwell, for Heaven is in these lips,  
And all is dross that is not Helena.  
I will be Paris, and for love of thee,  
Instead of Troy, shall Wittenberg be sack'd;  
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,  
And wear thy colours on my pluméd crest;  
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,  
And then return to Helen for a kiss.  
Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air  
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;  
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter  
When he appeared to hapless Semele:  
More lovely than the monarch of the sky  
In wanton Arethusa's azur'd arms;  
And none but thou shalt be my paramour!

And into the hall where this immortal spirit is harping to his fellows, enters Mr. Shaw with words of kindly patronage and a penny whistle.

Of course if Mr. Shaw cares to, he may urge that the verse-technique of his Bashville is intentionally grotesque, composed in that style in the intention of achieving humorous effect. But this gives one the right to demand that he shall compose something in this metre which shall be intentionally beautiful, before criticizing adversely, and in his *ex cathedra* style, the old masters of this country with their four centuries of fame in the world.

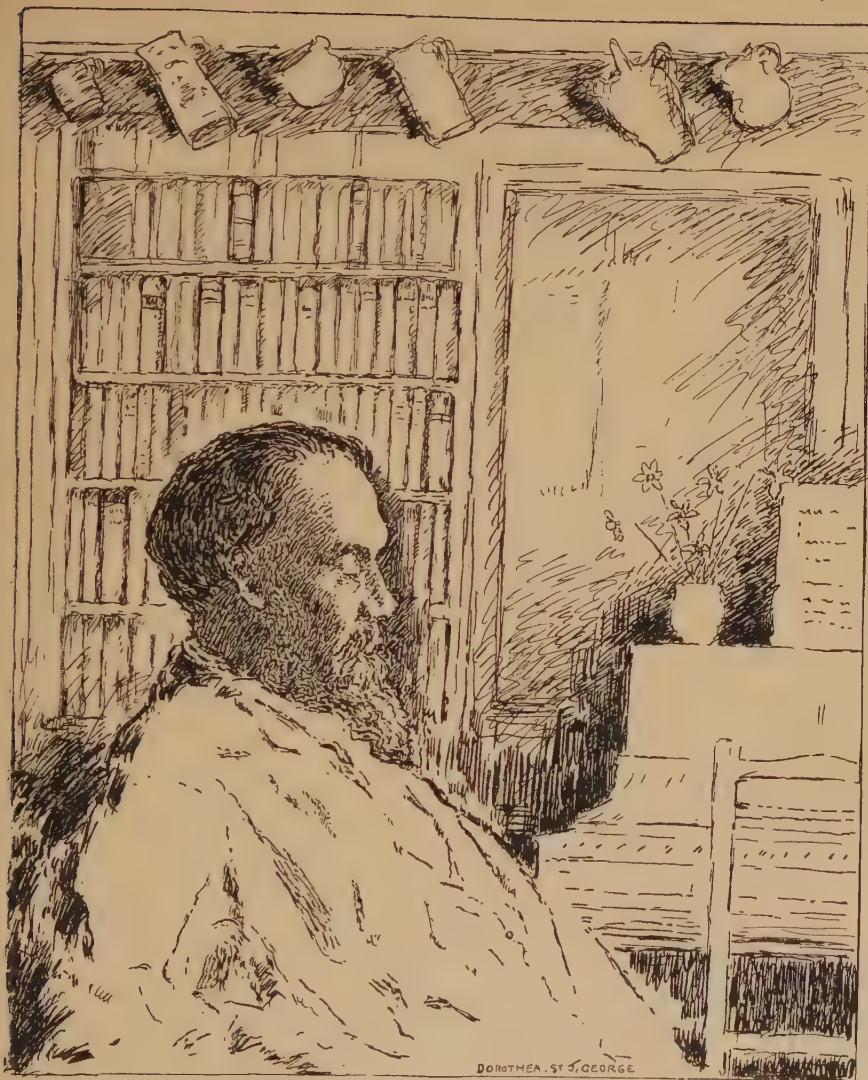
When some *flaneur* assures one that Titian could not paint, nor Michelangelo carve, nor Wagner compose music, one asks oneself what achievements in these fields the critic has to *his* credit, and, if none, one not unreasonably assumes such dicta to result from pretentiousness and arrogance. So also when informed dogmatically—as from some father of the Inquisition—that Marlowe had “a common sort of brain,” that Beaumont and Fletcher were “penny-a-liners,” and Shakespeare, in his last and grandest manner, “a chaos,” one would desire Mr. Shaw to show that he can do at least as well as the masters he decries. What blank verse has Mr. Shaw ever composed which any poet—of acknowledged reputation in this department of composition—would dare to rank with that of Marlowe or of Webster, or of Beaumont and Fletcher, or of Shakespeare? Not one act, not one scene, not one part of a scene, not one passage, not one line. It takes an architect to build a cathedral, but any wrecker

can throw bombs, and call attention to himself by doing so. There is an aphorism, pithy and to the point, which, since Mr. Shaw entertains a high regard for its author, I commend to his careful consideration. "He who can, does; he who cannot, teaches."

I have known Edwin Evans, the musical critic, for a considerable number of years. Though exceedingly fond of music, the whole technical side of that art is a closed book to me, so that it may well be asked what in the world we find to talk about when we forgather. That is easily answered. "Teddy" Evans, as Chelsea insists on calling him, is a man with an exceedingly wide scope of interests. His prose writing is distinguished, lucid, epigrammatic; he is a wit, a poet, a gastronome, a man of the world. A critic of life no less than of music, he flatters himself he is as good a judge of a cocktail as of a symphony.

A collection of pictures by modern masters is the distinguishing feature of his Coleherne Road studio. Shutting my eyes, I can recall a Lovat Fraser, a Bakst, an Augustus John, a "Teddy" caricatured by Picasso, and a whole host of others. Every square inch of wall some picture covers, save those where he has set up shelves to house a library of volumes dealing, for the most part, with the history and criticism of music.

No prose sketch of his personality is required, for, like Sir John Falstaff—whom in certain other respects also he resembles—he is "well known as Paul's." One should



EDWIN EVANS, THE MUSICAL CRITIC

*A wit, a poet, a gastronome, a man of the world.*





avoid statements which one is not prepared to substantiate. I ventured to assert that Evans is a wit. The following song which Goossens has set to music, displays surely a very piquant irony :

A poet sang to a flower,  
and many heard ;  
Those who loved the poet  
said, " How beautiful !"  
Those who loved him not  
said, " How charming !"  
The flower sang in reply,  
but only the poet heard.

But of course you want the spoken voice—to get the full flavour of this caustic trifle, you require " Teddy's " pronunciation of the " How beautiful " and " How charming." The correct intonation makes a world of difference. " The song is a great success," he will tell you, " with the people at whom it is aimed."

" One often hears a critical opinion dismissed," says " Teddy," " as a matter of taste. So it is. It all depends upon *whose*. . . ."

How did the topic of night clubs crop up in the conversation ? Oh, I remember ! Some gentlewomanly old gentlemen from the provinces had been venting their moral indignation in the columns of a too indulgent press—sporadic upward oozings of Puritan marsh-gas.

" Night clubs," says Evans, " are man's natural and dignified protest against being over-governed. They are a sign of the robust health of the community which objects

to being wet-nursed. In a community of sheep there would be no night clubs."

He is passionately fond of colour. At the Russian Ballet some foolish female demanded: "Do you not prefer neutral tints?"

"No," said he, "you see I am not neutral myself."

When Strauss first visited Paris one of his satellites, disappointed at the Master's reception, was so tactless as to remark that, if the French proved impervious to the ideas of modern Germany, these would have to be imposed upon them at the point of the bayonet. Reynaldo Hahn was equal to the occasion:

"Les français aiment mieux mourir à coup de bayonnette qu'à coup de rasoir."

This "Teddy" neatly rendered:

"The French would rather be *stabbed* to death than *bored* to death."

But his most sparkling *mot* can only be related in connexion with what remains the great tragedy of his life. At a party at Ravel's he gave utterance to *The Mot*. To be praised by the brilliant Ravel is no common honour. He is a Petronius Arbiter of wit; an accepted exquisite in the traffic of words. And Ravel proclaimed "Teddy's" epigram—"Le mot de la soirée."

But, on waking next morning, the devil was in it if he could recall either the epigram itself, or the occasion which had given it birth. The morning coffee had no power to stimulate memory. The gem remained fathoms under,

deep-sunken in the ocean bed of the sub-conscious. While "Teddy" was pacing the room, a prey to despair and distracting doubts, Maurice Delage looked in, like the *deus ex machina*; his coming was providential, for Delage himself had been one of the company the previous evening. *He would remember.*

"Good talk, last night," said Teddy, reminiscent.

"Superb!" assented Delage; "we were in grand fettle!"

"I said something rather good, didn't I?"

"Good? My dear boy, I should rather think you did! Why, it was brilliant. The great Ravel proclaimed it 'Le mot de la soirée'!"

"Why, now you mention it, so he did. Er—what *was* it, by the way?"

"But you *must* remember! You *can't* have *forgotten*! It was—now what the devil was it? Oh, damn it! The thing has gone clean out of my head! But it shall *not* be *lost*. We will taxi round to Ravel's and lure the conversation round to the topic of last night's party. In this way we are sure to recapture it."

So said, so done. A taxi was secured without delay by these masters of thought and action, and ten minutes later they had sent up their names, and were being ushered into Ravel's sitting-room. Ravel, it transpired, was in bed when they called, and his toilet was not such as could be completed within the boiling of an egg. Extremely anxious, on the grounds of hospitality, not to keep his friends waiting, he rushed into the business of dressing with such

tumultuous impetuosity that one hour had barely elapsed ere his step was heard upon the stair, as he descended to bid his visitors welcome.

"Morning, Ravel!"

"Morning!"

"Morning!"

"Great talk, last night!"

"Ah, my dear fellow!" cried Ravel, "you, Monsieur Evans, above all! You were in superlative form!" He was coming to it! He was coming to it! "If you remember, it was you who made the *mot* of the evening."

"Did I? What was it?"

"You don't mean to tell me you have forgotten! It was—now what the devil was it? . . . Yes!—No!"

That, Teddy will tell you, is the great tragedy of his life.

Evans considers himself a critic by temperament and predisposition. Students of English Literature well know that the born critic is almost as rare a product of Nature as the born artist. Our greatest literary critics were almost without exception producing artists themselves; such were Coleridge, Lamb, Pater, Swinburne; while such purely incidental criticism as has been left us by Keats and Rossetti in stray letters and prefaces outvalues volumes from those writers who had no inside knowledge. Perhaps it is with music as with letters, for certainly Edwin Evans is an exquisite pianist.

"Criticism," one has heard him regret, "is too often a profession into which men drift when other ventures have

failed. Happily the days are gone—though they may return—when a reporter who failed to give an account in readable English of a police court scene or a fashionable wedding was put to musical criticism as representing the last alternative before dismissal.”

Evans’ attitude towards music, and towards life, is the epicurean.

“Music,” he insists, “should be judged by its direct appeal to whatever be the intellectual equivalent of the physical palate. It is good or bad absolutely upon its own grounds.”

This, one remembers, was very much the attitude which characterized Swinburne and the other upholders of the doctrine of “Art for Art’s Sake,” whose tenets at the time provoked a veritable storm of disgust. The curate had supposed that Art, despite appearances, was really there as the “handmaid of the church”—*his* church. He asked for the catechism in rhyme, and a portrait of Elijah fed by ravens. The “man in the street,” with his antagonist upon the tub, desired the expression of some stirring political creed—imperialism, socialism, anarchism. Oxford dons, more recondite, demanded of the artist a “certain path” or a “message,” just as old women will from tea-cups. The pietists requested to be “elevated,” and boosted generally along the road to “progress”—though as to the precise direction in which that lay, no two of them were agreed. Mr. H. G. Wells turned his back upon Art, and stared into a shop-window at model trains and aeroplanes, and Mr. Bernard



Shaw demanded of the artist a "religion," meaning thereby a negation of all that had passed for religion hitherto. Social reformers bawled for "moral enlightenment amongst the masses," and the "tired business man"—who imagined that he had bought the artist to amuse his leisure, precisely as one might fee a family buffoon—gave it to be understood that "moral enlightenment" was the very last thing he desired. But the final value of all things being, to the artist, their inspirational value to *himself*, he continued, in spite of the clatter, to give his vision of life in preference to the conflicting visions of other people, some of whom appeared to him, in his egotism, to be myopic and congenitally incapable of any vision whatsoever. A pity that great minds can be so self-centred and perverse.

"Taste," says Edwin Evans, "is concerned with flavour. It is not concerned with ethics or didactics. A veal cutlet may suggest the parable of the Prodigal Son, but its flavour will be none the better for that.

"Taste is not concerned with those fundamental ideas of love and death which certain people are fond of dragging into musical debate, except in so far as their intrusion into music is often in the worst possible taste."

A man lives in his aphorisms, and these random reminiscences of "Teddy's" table-talk may give a tolerably good idea of the man.

It is always interesting to discover what first determines a man to enter the particular field where later he is to distinguish himself. From the scope of his interests Evans

might have specialized in sculpture, or poetry or painting—what particular cause impelled him to give music the preference?

“I just happened to come along at a time when the venue of the young musicians was an event of more significance than any other in the art world. Music, in the creative sense, had been dormant in England since the seventeenth century. England had become the consumer; no longer the producer. Englishmen were suburbanites by conviction.

“Then gradually—I am speaking now of twenty-five years ago—there were signs of a new creative impulse. The early Victorian staff merely attempted to do again what had been done better before. The first manifestations of the new spirit were inevitably impetuous. The youngsters were breaking through the limitations imposed upon them by their schoolmasters. There was, equally inevitably, a widespread tendency to repress them, for not doing precisely what those who taught them had always been doing.”

At this juncture Evans first made himself prominent, in the capacity—the expression is his own—of “intellectual ringmaster.” He saw fair. To discover greatness while the crowd are as yet indifferent, professors hostile, and the dilettante “being funny,” to recognize in the first place that a man has talent and then to rescue him from “the wolf’s black maw and the dull ass’s hoof,” is to deserve well of one’s country. This Edwin Evans did. It is perhaps his greatest contribution to the culture of his day.

Not, of course, that his reputation is by any manner of

means confined to the country of his birth. He has been awarded several foreign decorations, but I must not particularize for fear of indiscretion, as I remember his entreating me very earnestly upon one occasion to "say nothing about the millinery." *Punch* has twice devoted to him full-page travesties, the equivalents, one must suppose, of foreign orders. And, yes, he was given a dinner. This last was a happy thought, as the post of guest of honour at a banquet is no sinecure when held by "Teddy," who, though far from being "last" in an intellectual "fray," is not uncommonly "first at a feast."

I have sometimes wondered why no young artist of the "London group" has as yet hit upon the idea of a contemporary "Judgment of Paris." It might be wonderfully effective. Apollo offers a lyre, Ceres the fruits of the earth, and Bacchus a wine list. "Teddy" is, of course, the Boy Paris. He looks long at Apollo, long at Bacchus, long at Ceres—for Ceres is a lady. Altogether he appears utterly distracted. In a grotto hard by an Arcadian reporter scribbles upon a jotter, "Which Divinity is Divinest?" "Critic's Curious Crux!"

The banquet was a great affair, and the London of music appeared in force. There were Arnold Bax and Lord Berners, Arthur Bliss, Frank Bridge, Eugene Goossens, Gustave Holst, and Percy Pitt, and Ethel Smyth of "Bosun's Mate" fame. From abroad congratulatory telegrams kept arriving from such composers as Ravel, Casella, de Falla and Stravinsky. And the company decreed that his portrait

should be painted by Wyndham Lewis. As this decision was announced aloud, a curious noise, a very odd sort of a sound indeed, as of some one in a paroxysm of choking, caused for a moment a very real consternation. It was discovered to emanate from an old gentleman with side whiskers, who had appeared till now peculiarly indifferent to the festive proceedings. "Too good, too good," he asseverated, with a look of quite uncanny malevolence, "'Teddy' Evans to be painted by Wyndham Lewis. It is an inspiration! But he richly deserves it, gentlemen, he richly deserves it. *Make the punishment fit the crime!*"

## CHAPTER IV

"The Night

Shows stars and women in a better light."

BYRON, *Don Juan*.

AS you go up Sherwood Street from Piccadilly, you will notice on your right-hand side a very narrow passage which grows broader as you enter. As you go in, you see a sort of male cashier who does not appear to have anything to do with cash. He is shouting and gesticulating; "If you want the Bullfrogs Club," he cries, "it's two doors from here on the left." And you do want the Bullfrogs Club. Wonderful how he knows! And who pays the salary which this resident thought-reader must be supposed to receive for sitting up all night in a cashier's box, giving sailing orders to revellers who have lost their bearings? Nobody knows. It is one of the mysteries of London's underworld.

So you retrace your steps, and melting through a fissure in a wall somewhere near a tobacconist's shop, you find yourself in a quadrangle whose cliff-like walls are embellished with a number of staircases of the type which are not, as a rule, intended for use, and might even be dangerous. They are there to comply with some obscure County Council by-law which has to do with fire-escapes. These staircases, but for





THE ENTRANCE TO THE BULLFROGS CLUB

... melting through a fissure in a wall you find yourself in a quadrangle whose cliff-like walls are embellished with a number of staircases of the type which are not, as a rule, intended for use. . . .



their size, might have been constructed from a child's "Meccano box." Never mind, climb boldly, it is quite on the cards that they will not give way. So! You find yourself in a passage so narrow, that in the language of the States, a pig could never get past a man in it, unless the man were bow-legged. This passage leads you to the cloak-room. If you arrive on any evening from Monday to Friday inclusive, the attendant will hang your coat and hat on a peg. If you arrive on a Saturday, he will roll up your coat in a neat bundle, place it upon the floor and pin a ticket on top of it. You look about you and notice that he has already performed this manœuvre with other coats and hats, which you observe spaced out at tidy intervals across the floor. Do not imagine that he intends selling these lots by auction. I have no doubt he would like to, but he daren't. Your new crush hat and stick and dress overcoat are perfectly safe. He gives himself all this trouble only because Saturday is a busy night and there are no more pegs to spare.

The little red door on your right, which looks as though it belonged to a cupboard where you might expect to find a dust-pan and brush, with a few scraps of brown paper perhaps and odds and ends of string, is in reality the great main portico which conducts you straight into the combined dance hall and restaurant of the Bullfrogs Club. This apartment consists of three rooms knocked into one. In the centre division you dance, in the portions which abut upon it you back your sentiments with food and drink, and that dark-haired, olive-skinned little fellow is Marc Antony, the pianist,

who wrings as much rhythm out of jazz as you have juice out of an orange when nothing is left but the skin, and the pulp, and the pips. The walls are painted that ingratiating shade of red which is called, I believe, maroon. It is a pleasant colour to the eye if you happen to come upon it when a thick London fog is obscuring issues outside. The electric lights shine through a sort of oiled silk which softens and tones down the glare until it has become almost as mellow as candlelight. Why the waiters are attired as Mexican bandits no one has so far discovered, but the costume at least puts you on your guard, and, here as elsewhere, there is nothing to prevent you from counting your change.

A well-known poet and myself had once the pleasure of conducting to the Bullfrogs two young persons resplendent with jewels—so you see *some* people strike lucky in this wondrous world. I think they must have been lineal descendants of that Colonel Blood who so nearly succeeded in bolting with the Regalia out of the Tower. But for all that they were guileless young things, and insisted on being removed to the Café de Paris where the assistants wear evening dress. They were frightened, you see, of the waiters.

The sign of the house is a large green bullfrog in porcelain, who sits all by himself in a special niche in the wall. It is not the least use to try and carry him away as a souvenir, for you will find that the promoters of the Club have already considered this possibility and the mascot is just too big even for a poacher's pocket. There are also pictures which depict the sports and pastimes of bullfrogs. Two such creatures,





AT THE MERRY BULLFROGS

*There is a natural animation about the place and there is, in the pretty phrase of Herrick, "a deal of youth."*





with the stupid countenances of club bores, indulge a *tête-à-tête*. One feels sure that they are discussing whatever may happen to be the equivalent in the frog community of the Irish Question. "We shall not see it settled in *our* time," says the one, with gloomy relish. "Not in our time, no," the other echoes him back, and glooms prodigiously.

Another effort which bears strong traces of Japanese facture, presents us with a crew of young bullfrogs delicately tiptoeing towards us with rushes balanced upon their noses. Other frogs watch them, and these I think must be young ladies, for otherwise they would hardly be willing to make quite such fools of themselves. But I am no anatomist, and do not pretend to determine with finality the sex of frogs, above all in modern painting.

The Bullfrogs is a true Bohemian Club. You may turn up in white tie and tails or in plus fours and a cutty clay. I remember dancing there one evening with a partner in a tweed walking costume.

"It's too hot to be cosy for dancing in, but I *do* like to be comfortable upon a journey."

"You are going into the country?"

"No, Tunis. My traps are all in the cloak-room at Victoria, and I have just hared round for a bit of fun while waiting for the train."

"Fly with me," said I.

"Allow me to introduce you to my husband," said she.

"Oh, don't take *him* with us," I entreated, "he is sure to be abominably in the way!"

If I were to run across some Frenchman from the provinces who still indulged, upon the faith of his caricaturists, that obsolescent superstition about English girls not being pretty, I should simply hail a taxi and bundle him into the Bullfrogs Club. I have never seen so many pretty women clustered together under one roof, as I have sometimes at the Bullfrogs, of a Saturday night. I have heard women themselves express the same opinion, and artists to whom the show is new invariably fall to sketching profiles or full faces upon the backs of the menu cards. There is a natural animation about the place and there is, in the pretty phrase of Herrick, "A deal of youth." It is possible, in defiance of all the laws of health, to sit out the night in an atmosphere which is just blue with tobacco smoke, and to re-emerge from it in the morning invigorated as though with sea breezes.

But there are more ways than one of writing about Night Clubs, and really when I read the tosh that is related of them in the Yellow Press, and greedily devoured in the suburbs, I feel sorely tempted to go and write likewise, for I can do it quite as well as those fellows—better . . .

My friends, Augustus John and Epstein, had both departed, pleading prior engagements, and I was seated all alone, sipping my absinthe at a little marble-topped table in the Bullfrogs. Slowly she rose and came towards me, and her eyes—my friend, I have never seen such eyes, they were marvellous, lustrous is too weak a word to describe them. They would have fixed a rattlesnake.

"You *are* George Henry?" She was inquiring.



ENTRANCE TO THE HAMBONE CLUB





"I am!" I replied with conviction, although of course I had not the remotest notion who George Henry might be.

"I recognized you at once," said she, "by your distinguished bearing. Now listen carefully, these are your instructions. To-morrow is Sunday. You will proceed by the District Railway to Kew Gardens, disguised as a tourist. You will enter the Sub-Tropical House by the South-East Entrance, and you will find the Papers in the third flower-pot on the right, as you go in. There will be no one to obstruct you. As for the Duchess she is at this moment lying pinioned underneath the geyser, gagged with her own loofah—see where she bit my arm?"

I quailed at those livid weals, and suggested boracic ointment. She only shrugged.

"And as for Scotland Yard, 'The Yard'"—she laughed with high derision—"they are still watching the old slop-shop at Wapping!"

"And now I must go back to Lenin; I promised him this dance, and we must not let the Saviour of his People feel lonely and deserted in this ugly London. But between ourselves, he will *never* fox-trot. No sense of rhythm whatever. Comrade, *Adios!*"

She raised her finger-tips for me to kiss and she was gone. I watched the supple sway—how like a flower!—the almost girlish grace of carriage. As she walked she literally radiated fascination. A waiter swooned.

Or thus:

I saw at once that he was not English, despite the very

English cut of his fashionable dress suit. I had seen him once or twice before at Los Angeles, Broadstairs and (of course) upon the "Boule Miche."

He caught my eye, came over towards me and introduced himself to me in these singular words :

"I am a commercial traveller, and my firm think that you will like to sample a brand of one of our really excellent cigars."

This was something of a relief to me. From the rich diamond dress studs I had fancied he was "Mr. A." I held the cigar to my ear and pinched it.

"No, no, no! *Sacré nom d'un chien!*" cried he with sudden agitation. "I give you the wrong one," and I heard him murmur to himself once or twice, "Never do, no, no; nitro-glycerine!"

I returned his cigar, for it struck me there was something fishy about it.

"This," he corrected himself, "is the brand of cigar my Firm thought you would fancy. Nice cigar, eh?"

I looked at the band. There was no manufacturer's name, but only this legend, printed in excellent English but in the Turkish character: "Try-me. Dope. Keep in a Cool Place." I did not like the fellow; there was something feline about him. There always is something feline about that kind of man. But he did not leave me time to reject his sample, for he was already moving away to another table, singing to himself an appallingly inaccurate version of "Why did I Kiss that Girl?" in one of the sixteen dialects



GEORGE BELCHER TAKES A FRIEND  
TO THE GARGOYLE CLUB



of Crim Tartary which display Kurdish modifications in the vowel sounds. And he sang with an atrocious Mongol brogue.

By the time I was taking my departure, I had completed, in my mind, my plan for exposing the fellow. Suddenly the lights went out! We were raided. I was caught with the cigar in my possession—but my hair is beginning to grow again now.

The Gargoyle, like so many other night clubs, holds its revels in "Dark Soho," which you may reach from the roaring Charing Cross Road *via* the Palace, or north-by-east out of the fluff and glare and glitter of Piccadilly Circus. Turn into Dean Street and then—why then just fade away into that seemingly negligible and wholly unobtrusive alley, which is as shrinking as the primrose, indeterminable as air, and elusive as Will-o'-the-wisp. Do not go too early. The alley does not materialize before about 9.30 p.m. It just *happens* at about that hour and has no real existence before. It fades, like Hamlet's ghost, upon the "crowing of the cock." This alley will conduct you to the Lilliputian lift which will just hold four, if the visitors are thin and have not dined. Mount boldly, and step out into the Elizabethan kitchen; surprising, but London is full of surprises. The open fire of mellow red brick, oak tables, oak dresser, oak rafters—nothing lacks to complete the picture. In this apartment the ghost of Sir Walter Raleigh appeared to the Wine Steward, in the chill dawn following the night of Boat Race Day. "Had I been only a man of letters," said the spectre, "I should not



have found my way to the Gargoyle Club ; but I was an explorer too—— ” Why are ghosts always so *obvious* ?

The effect of so much oak might be sombre were it not for the window curtains with their yellow, green and red stripes, and yellow lanterns suspended from the mouths of gargoyles—badges of the club—which project grotesquely from the walls.

A lack of proper ventilation is the curse of many night clubs. If headaches for “the morning after” are to be inflicted on the guests, then in Heaven’s name let them arise from the placating of Bacchus rather than the outraging of Hygeia. On this score all honour to the Gargoyle. For they have a dancing-floor in the centre of their roof garden. In this fashion one can indulge in the most delightful exercise known to man and, at the same time, breathe. Who, I wonder, was the inventor of this most original device ?

The instinct to create roof gardens is an eminently sane characteristic of the times. The Hambone Club had one likewise and no bad one either. If London, alone of the great cities of Europe, is to be deprived of the system of Cafés with their open-air terraces, let us, by all manner of means, create roof gardens. The Englishman is rapidly becoming that lover of the open air which he has long only pretended to be. He works in an office which, as like as not, gives upon a shaft worthy of a coal-mine. But this bright prospect he is commonly spared, for his soot-encrusted windows are opaque as tin plate. He is electrically lighted at his desk even at midsummer. So to lunch, in a subterranean cell which he



AT THE HAMBONE CLUB



calls a “canteen,” and home at last in the evening, wafted there in that type of railway carriage to which the thoughtful William Morris long since applied the epithet of “stinking.” If the aforesaid Englishman plays golf over the week-end it is less, perhaps, from any abstract love of fresh air than from the apprehension that an early death awaits him if he neglect this precaution. So the goldfish might claim to be a mighty lover of his bowl if he supplicated to be replaced within its confines after lying an hour upon a blotting-pad. The habit of building roof gardens, if it spread widely, may at last create a section of the community who really prefer London clean to London dirty, and if they desire it, the thing will be achieved, since it is only a matter of tackling the problem seriously, and with the electrification of railways the first step has already been taken. And roof-gardens—always supposing that their number continues steadily to increase—should produce a happy effect upon our architecture and sculpture, for once spectators have acquired the habit of looking at views they are apt to demand that those views shall be worth looking at.

The roof dance-floor of the Gargoyle is raised some half a foot or more above the rest of its surface, and thus it sometimes happens that couples are apt to tumble off, especially if the night be no longer young. There are Christmas trees in pots—a playful device, and such chimneys of the neighbours as infringe at all upon the view have been painted a brilliant red, doubtless without their owners’ knowledge—a merry conceit !

The lighting of this part of the Club premises displays an odd fantasy upon the part of the electrician, for a rosy glow filters *upwards* through the frosted glass of the tops of the tables. Electricians can be as mad as anybody if they really care to make the effort. I must admit, however, that the effect is the reverse of unpleasing. There is no glare. The light is adequate and very restful to the eyes. Excepting these table lights illumination is lacking save for the moon—a luminary justly associated by our ancestors with all kinds of sorcery and witchcraft. It is a superb glimpse which this roof of the Gargoyle affords of a lulled and moon-bathed London. The yellow twinkling of this city, extensive as a province, fills the soul with wonder at its immensity, and the soft canopy of the London night sky—if the moon be up and the threat of rain be absent—is no whit less lovely than that of Venice. “The poor chimneys become campanili, and the whole city hangs in the heavens, and fairyland is before us.” Whistler looked upon London with the eyes of a lover, but he brought the world to acknowledge the beauty of his mistress.

Among the people of note whom you may happen upon at the Gargoyle are Noel Coward, Eugene Goossens, Hermione Baddeley, Molly Kerr, Elizabeth Pollard, George Belcher and Arnold Bennett. I once, when very young, found myself sitting next the last-named—or so I supposed—at the performance of one of his plays.

“Are you Mr. Bennett?” I interjected, hoping by direct attack to surprise him into a confession.

“*Wish I wos,*” replied the individual whom I had addressed





THE SILVER CEILING AT  
THE GARGOYLE CLUB  
(PORTRAIT—ALFRED PRAGA)



—but evasively, methought, and with counterfeit accent. And I have not to this day discovered whether this gentleman was Mr. Arnold Bennett, or Mr. Arnold Bennett's double, or some Scotland Yard detective disguised for some obscure purpose as Mr. Arnold Bennett, or merely some hum-drum character designing to impersonate Mr. Arnold Bennett at some fancy dress ball "after the show."

The Poets' Club came into existence some eighteen years ago in an upper room of the Rendezvous, a more Bohemian restaurant then than now. The banquet which first showed an astonished world that the singing birds had quitted their eggs was held in a room of the United Arts Club courteously lent for the occasion—worms, seed and groundsel from Rumpelmayer.

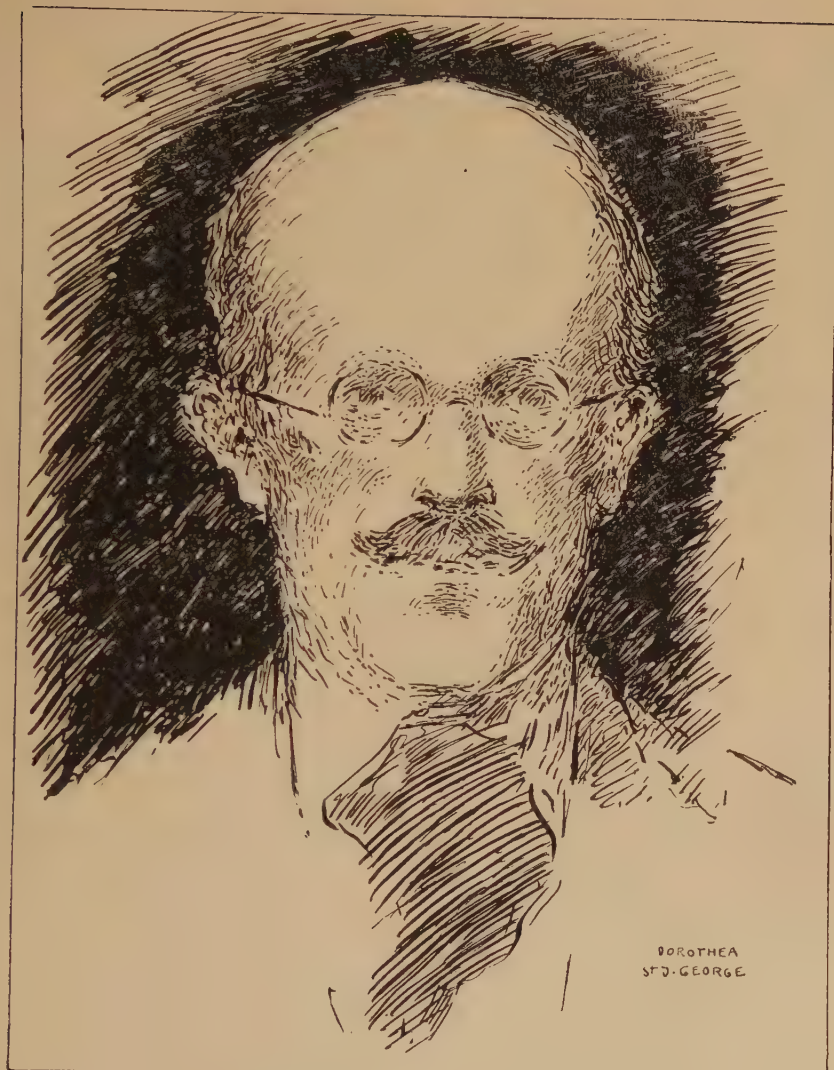
The tradition which associates singing with cooking is old and true. Monsieur Jusserand was the first to observe that the Elizabethan dramatists died either of starvation or of indigestion in one another's houses. "Minerva loves the larder," exclaimed a poet of those days, and he added reminiscently :

Old Sutcliffe's wit  
Did never hit  
Till after his bag-pudding.

Perhaps this was so, but what wit could come out of a bag-pudding one is at a loss to conjecture—some jape perhaps which savoured less of the rapier than of the bludgeon, or limerick which might bring the blush of shame to the cheek

of a rhinoceros in the Zoo. Emile Cammaerts has a quaint conceit. He assured us all, in a speech at the "Poets," that the mysticism inherent in the Flemish people was directly traceable to their inordinate love of eating! Ascetics who starved themselves were cranks, cheats, rogues, and a most despicable set of impostors. The dreams and visions of the hearty feeder were the only genuine, because the seer and dreamer was in sound bodily health, and not guilty as is the ascetic of underhand juggling with Nature to procure his effects. So you see!

The foundation of the "Poets" was due to the initiative of Mr. Henry Simpson, and the incredible man has missed but one meeting, so runs a cherished legend, throughout the full eighteen years of the Club's existence. Certainly his indefatigable energies have sufficed to maintain it to this day, in its first flourishing estate. At the time of its inception public appreciation of poetry had sunk to a very low ebb. The ambition of the Club was twofold: to do what might be done towards the encouragement of the reading of poetry, and to offer a convenient field for the declamation of verses by their composers. It was the only Club of its day where poets might play the part of Praxitelean rhapsodist or mediæval minstrel, and the several institutions and societies which now exist for such purposes are but so many rivulets from the parent lake. The Poets' Club remains to-day the sole club, to my knowledge, in England and Wales, where membership is confined exclusively to poets—a limitation which does not of course apply to guests. With regard to



*The foundation of the "Poets" was due to the  
initiative of Mr. Henry Simpson*





these latter the "Poets" are extremely catholic. Any bard from overseas, whether from the temperate zone, or tropic, or arctic, who appears forlorn and out of his element in London, is sure, sooner or later, to be swooped upon by Henry Simpson, who will bear him away to his eyrie, much as the baby elephant was pounced upon and carried off by the Roc in Marco Polo—not, however, to be eaten but to eat. In this way a service not wholly negligible is performed towards the maintenance of international good feeling. The Club has entertained Cammaerts; that superb reciter Marcel Wyseur; and that coloured, vital and sonorous master, the late Verhaeren—all three of whom were elected to membership. I remember a Serbian meeting when Joseph Kosor, the leading Serb poet and dramatist, was the guest of honour. Extracts from his sombre masterpieces were intoned by Patrick Kirwan from English translations by Paul Selver, the accomplished translator of much Slavonic work into our tongue. Professor Lavrin—who had held the chair of Slavonic languages at the University of Birmingham—read us an address on Serbian poetry; while Father Nicolai, the Serbian diplomat, a charming personality, informed us of certain characteristics of his poetic fellow-countryman.

"Our little Kosor," said the Priest, "has two loves: Woman and the Stars."

The evening was a tremendous success, and that in spite of one most unfortunate linguistic lapse. How few of us possess what the precious Horace Walpole would have styled "the happiness of the Slavonic language"! How few of us

Londoners can pretend to have these quaint Serbian family names, as they say, "on the tip of the tongue"! The President's acquaintance with Serbian was but so-so, that of the committee was no less rusty, and so it befell that—through default of some officer to fill the rôle of King's Remembrancer—the President in his Presidential address, referred to the learned Professor Lavrin as "Mr. Latrine." Immense tact was displayed. Not a muscle twitched. It was a superb concerted effort and British restraint was never more magnificently exemplified than in the complete absence of even a smile. A magnificent volume with coloured plates of Serbian churches was presented to Mr. Simpson by his distinguished guests as a tribute of honour. One does not laugh in a church however much one may be tempted; perhaps the gift was symbolic—who shall determine?

There was also a Russian evening in those far-off days when men were prophesying great matters of the "Russian Steam-roller," an apparatus possessed, as it proved later, of strange mechanical flaws. Who that attended the Russian evening at the Poets' Club will forget that burly and bearded patriarch, rococo synthesis of all the Russian novels, when, hugging the President like a bear, he exclaimed with frenzy: "Russia will never forget Henry Simpson! The names "Henry" and "Simpson" will live for ever in the hearts of the great Russian People!"

Speculative philosophers, with others not sanguine by temperament, are persuaded that all memory of the great name has perished during the recent troubles. Facilities



AT A POETS' CLUB DINNER

GILBERT FRANKAU, SHEILA KAYE-SMITH,  
COMPTON MACKENZIE





for free divorce threw married Russians into a ferment of pleasurable anticipation. A like facility with regard to free remarriage enchanted the hearts of those Russians who were divorced already. But the final taking away of the wives altogether, to communize them completely, destroyed the married amenities of bachelor establishments, and provoked sinister crimes of passion on the part of "confirmed misogynists." Diplomatic short-sightedness meanwhile was rendering the situation complex. The aristocrats had perished under the suspicion of a supposed distinguished something in their bearing. Professors of Universities were butchered by a superstitious peasantry which fancied it beheld in them men of emancipated minds, while the hated bourgeoisie were being driven in hordes to the scaffold, under the accusation, which they had not the wit to counter, that they were "hopelessly middle class." Only, far away upon the snowy Siberian border, when the owl hoots and the moon shines white over the pines, aged peasants hand on the great tradition and murmur over their synthetic soup the magic syllables—"Henry Simpson."

There was our Chinese evening. A Chinese in the picturesque costume of Old Peking, being called upon to recite, advanced for this purpose carrying a large screen, behind which he might decorously retreat should he desire to laugh. For the poem was a humorous poem, and to laugh in public was, he assured us, in the province of China which he had so recently quitted, an act of quite peculiar indecency. "Do not laugh," said he very reasonably, "do not laugh at *me*, but rather

admire my temerity in venturing to address you in English." So he recited, upon the scheme of one line of Chinese to one line of free translation, a poem entitled "To My Fiancée in Pekin." Whether it was the raciness of the translation, the quaintness of the audacious little fellow, or the mere expansiveness of the first hour of digestion who shall say? But we laughed so immoderately that the poor chap became infected in his turn, and was compelled some five or six times to race behind his screen, whence strange shrieks emanated until he was prepared to re-emerge once more, his countenance purple but composed.

There was an American evening. Edward Price Bell, the London editor of the *Chicago Daily News*, selected for his topic "American Battle Poetry." It was Mr. Bell who through his enthusiastic and inflammatory articles did more to excite American popular opinion and bring the Americans from their neutrality to the party of the Allies, than any one man with the exception of Walter Page, the Ambassador.

And, amongst historical but more definitely English evenings, one remembers a reception of the Club by Sir John and Lady Henniker Heaton. They revived that mediæval institution the Court of Poetry, and the laurel wreath was duly presented to the successful troubadour. Fancy dress was worn, though there was no pedantry as to period. One recalled an Australian poetess whose tight white buckskin breeches proved conclusively that a woman can look even more like a woman if only she will dress like a man. Our ancestors did not burn Joan of Arc for sporting the breeks—who *ever*



Edith Stowell

*A Guest at 'The Ports' Club.*



burnt a Principal Boy?—but they felt that her armour did not set off her figure. They wanted their saint to look seductive—and the saint would consult with Hawkes and not Lucille.

Our first “President of Honour” at the Poets’ Club was the Italian Ambassador, the Marquis de San Giuliano, who took a most active part in the proceedings.

“Excuse me if I gesticulate,” he would interject apologetically while addressing the Club, “but I am a Sicilian.”

He told Henry Simpson that his true field should have been diplomacy, and one recalls several instances where the President’s diplomatic faculty stood the Club in good stead. Once, for instance, in the presence of a clerical member, a Semitic visitor declaimed a rhapsody wherein he described with a thought too much colour a mythical dance of bishops with ballet girls at a Chelsea Arts Ball. The Hebrew Patriarchs, with their staffs and robes and flowing white beards, were doubtless imposing old fellows enough, but the Hebrew Pan is no divinity for Western Europe. The clergyman sent in his resignation—and yet the President contrived to “reconcile these irreconcilables.”

And one recalls the calm level tones with which he continued a presidential address while a drunken Icelandic—who had arrived none knew whence, but apparently with a view to breaking up the meeting—was being thrown down-stairs.

And once a fortune-teller introduced herself after dinner under the pretence of being a poetess. Her *sotto voce* remarks were penetrating. “You,” said she, addressing a married



man who was sitting with his wife at table, "you have got the sort of woman who is no earthly good to you. But never say 'die'! You will find your true affinity within the year!" And the odd part of it is that the couple, whom everybody supposed to be devoted to each other, filed their petitions a few months later. She had cast a spell upon them, no doubt.

She likewise informed a composer of very ethereal lyrics, but who happens to be hypersensitive as to his slightly Semitic cast of features, that he would have a prosperous financial year and bring off a lucky *coup* in the City.

Nobody threw *her* downstairs, not so much because the action might have been construed into a lack of chivalry, but because—well, you know, she might have afflicted us all with cramps, or caused us to vomit packets of pins. She *was* got rid of somehow, however, and off she went with a "Come round all to my studio after the show, boys!" and an abortive attempt to borrow five shillings from the head waiter.

In the early days of the Club the Press were sceptical. Thomas Hardy, however, took it seriously.

"The idea of a Poets' Club," he wrote, "is a pleasing novelty to my intelligence. Its existence shows that the general impression that Poets are the most unclubable of men will have to be readjusted."

Maurice Hewlett, who accepted the post of "President of Honour" after the Marquis, wrote a letter of courteous acceptance which reveals, better perhaps than any passage in his books, his sensitive affectionate nature. "... It is very kind of the Poets," he wrote, "and I am a proud man.

These things mean a great deal to me, who never expect people to like me."

There was a wonderful meeting when Mr. G. K. Chesterton visited us, and as Club Guest addressed us brilliantly on "Scottish Ballad Poetry." His oratory was at its most sparkling when the door opened to reveal the dapper personality of Mr. Bernard Shaw. I fancy the pair were not quite the Pylades and Orestes they were later to become. I may be wrong—only an impression. The debate between the two grew stormy, and Mr. Chesterton, having delivered himself of a "clincher," flung himself back into a chair which collapsed beneath him. He rose unhurt, and we were delighted to sacrifice this movable to him. We would have ordered him in relays of chairs from Tottenham Court Road rather than forfeit one moment of his company.

It was upon this occasion, but later in the evening, that a retired M.P.—Irish Home Ruler—employed a chair for a purpose never contemplated by the carpenter, for he hit with it a fellow-diner who could see no magic in the lines :

Thou art either thyself a devil from Hell,  
Or else thy mither a witch maun be.  
I wadna ha' ridden that wan water  
For a' the gowd in Christentie—

and of course he did perfectly right.

The Chelsea Arts Club was founded in 1889. Stated as a bare fact this does not apparently convey much that is interesting ; but consider. The immense development of

outer London, and the filling in of all interspaces with brick and mortar, is surprisingly modern, and Chelsea in Victorian days was still very much what its lovers to-day delight jestingly to call it, "The Village." The district railway—so local antiquarians assure one—was not. The artist colony was more localized, for means of locomotion were astonishingly restricted. The poor poet journeyed hither and thither on foot, the pavement artist and man of moderate means by the slow horse-omnibus and the rich arrivist by exclusive hansom. There were in those days no Arts Cafés, no Bassani's or Good Intent, or Blue Cockatoo, and no means whatever of transporting oneself, in a mere trifle of a quarter of an hour or so, to take dinner in Soho. The Six Bells stood up alone—the Alexander Selkirk of Chelsea eating-houses—a captivating country public-house possessed of a superb bowling green. The cook, however, never let his imagination soar beyond the simple subtleties of "sausages and mashed" which, with ham sandwiches, appear to have made up in those days the sum-total of the vegetable and carnivorous resources of the kitchen.

The river-side was crowded with a congeries of old wharfs and timber houses long swept into oblivion, and James McNeil Whistler, in specially designed tall hat, frock-coat and patent leather boots, might have been observed leaning upon his long walking-cane, and surveying, through his monocle, a monument remote to us as the Mastodon—Old Battersea Bridge. In short the "Village" had not developed to speak of since the days of Nellie and the Merry Monarch, whose



THE "SIX BELLS," CHELSEA





flirtatious ghosts the inimitable Bateman depicted for us in the Souvenir Programme of one of the recent Chelsea Arts Balls.

The Club was founded primarily as a dining club, for the benefit of those artistic gastronomes who desired a more ample diet than that afforded by ham sandwiches and “mashed”; but good eating requires good drinking, good drinking promotes good conversation, and so the Chelsea Arts Club, as we know it to-day, was born. Whistler the witty was the most assiduous of its early frequenters; also John Sargent who gave the Club an admirable piano, and whose appetite—so a never-contested tradition assures us—demanded a beefsteak as an invariable supplement to the lunch or dinner of the day.

Many of the early members, unknown then or known only to a limited circle, have since achieved fame: Walter Sickert, for example, and John Lavery, Wilson Steer, Sir William Orpen; Derwent Wood, Havard Thomas and Pomeroy, the sculptors; George Henry, J. J. Shannon, George Clausen, George Lambert, Philip Connard, and, of course, the immortal Augustus.

In 1901 the Club removed from their original quarters, upon the site of the present Chenil Galleries, to their present habitat in Church Street, then a cottage with diminutive rooms and low old-fashioned ceilings. Some of the cottage atmosphere still clings about the premises despite reconstruction, a something homely which one would find it difficult, I think impossible, to parallel elsewhere in Clubland. And then there is a garden, the existence of which a passer-by

upon the road would never suspect, with bowling green and gay flower-beds and a pergola of roses.

In 1907 someone put to the Club a searching question productive of startling results.

"Why is it," said he, "that while in other great cities, Paris, Munich, Rome, etc., balls and pageants, organized by artists, have achieved world-wide fame, the artists of London have rarely enlivened their capital by such charming revels? Are we lacking," he demanded, "in the needful wit, fancy and daring; or do we scowl, like grim Puritans, at the spirit of fun and frolic?"

The result was the inauguration of the Chelsea Arts Balls, true pageants which, one supposes—if it were humanly possible to come to a just comparison—are no whit inferior for variety, inventiveness, vivacity and colour, to the earlier famous displays of forgotten Londoners in the days of the Stuarts and Tudors. And then the fun of it all! And the gay absurdity of the "stunts," the duration of which the committee limit to five minutes only, because people want to dance. . . .

One remembers a little model, attired as a page of the English Renaissance, seated upon a giraffe, which jazzed round the Albert Hall, forelegs and hindlegs in admirable time with the music, while the long spotted neck twisted itself into all manner of convolutions as the discerning creature caught sight of one pretty woman after another. There was the microbe of influenza too, the famous "'Flu Germ," a lovable creature, of the family of the scorpions apparently,



THE CHELSEA ARTS CLUB

*Some of the cottage atmosphere still clings about the premises despite reconstruction, a something homely which I should find it difficult, I think impossible, to parallel elsewhere in Clubland.*



but no one objected to his eighty legs which were furnished by precisely half that number of girl students, the rest of whose persons were concealed in the monster's body. His red eyes, well lighted with electricity, cast baleful glances. Inventive youth is never at a loss with new surprises. A white elephant some sixteen feet high with howdah and riders will evoke unfeigned laughter even from the professional optimist, especially when automatically propelled into the limelight, like a child's clockwork mouse, upon rubber-tyred wheels. And then the fox-hunt. . . .

Kill not the moth nor butterfly,  
For the last Judgement draweth nigh.

So William Blake, who was not a sporting man in the modern sense of the word, or indeed in any other. But this fox-hunt would not have been repugnant to the intensely sensitive soul of that inspired mystic. Two men supplied the motive power of a very red fox, two men also that of every horse, and there was a very full field. Riders were thrown repeatedly and fell in all directions, for the horses were amazingly full of mettle. Blood will tell. Spectators formed a serried ring, and so the fox found himself penned within so limited an arena that he could not go to earth even amidst the orchestra and behind the big drum. But, even although thus handicapped, he distanced all the field, and so gained upon his pursuers that he finished the race at the very heels of the last huntsman's horse.

"Well," the reader may exclaim, "and what is there in



all this ? Have there been no fancy dress dances in the world before that you lay such stress upon these of the Chelsea Arts Club ? ” Reader, when this club inaugurated the first of their brilliant series of balls, they introduced an innovation never sufficiently to be praised. They made fancy dress *compulsory*. This is now a common device, but the “ Chelsea Arts ” first thought this scheme out, and to them the credit of putting it first into practice. For at previous dances, fancy costume being optional, a small minority only came disguised, the large majority were in ordinary evening dress. There was therefore in those days nothing of that universality of colour which makes these frolics so spectacular. Hundreds of visitors annually pay good money merely for admission to watch the show, visitors, perhaps, who care little enough for dancing themselves. As the dancers circulate slowly in that huge enclosed space, or struggle, through the rays of the coloured searchlights, after falling air balloons—like children hunting for soap bubbles or Cabinet Ministers for popular applause—is there no pleasure in these kaleidoscopic effects ? They dazzle, they bewilder, but they most certainly delight.

Sometimes visitors who are not artists contrive to evade the committee's abiding regulation as to compulsory fancy dress. They deceive the custodians by entering in cloaks and dominoes which they subsequently discard, to appear in plain evening dress of black and white. They do not make themselves popular. Not only do they add nothing to the spectacle, but they immeasurably detract from it. Viewed



TWO O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING  
AT THE GARGOVIE CLUB

*"What has night to do with sleep?"*



from the upper galleries they present the appearance of so many black holes burnt by some careless cigarette smoker in a gorgeous carpet. The committee should create a new club servant, the Arts Gamekeeper. It should be the duty of this official—who should be remarkable for the peculiar splendour of his livery—to shoot at sight all such carrion crows as have the effrontery to intrude the impertinence of their society upon the peacocks and birds of paradise. Afterwards these gamekeepers should nail them to a door, as is the wont of gamekeepers when dealing with creatures which do not fit into the scheme of things and are neither useful nor ornamental.

Some time ago upon a holiday, a party of Spaniards were so kind as to condole with me about my having to subject myself to the penance of our dull English Sundays in London. Are we really so much to be pitied? Certainly in the Spanish town there was *one* Sunday amusement. One might go to the market-place of an evening and watch the peasants dance the Fandango. A pleasant dance, not unlike an Irish jig,—but have we no more scope than this in London? In the morning, if musically inclined, one may stroll to Westminster and enjoy Palestrina, after which a saunter in the Parks brings one agreeably to lunch-time, a lunch with music or without, according to the restaurant one selects. After lunch a golden opportunity presents itself for seeing something of the art treasures of the nation; then, if you like, a dancing tea, which brings us to dinner—doesn't it?—over which I, for one, shall be well content to dally with a carefully selected cigar

and a yellow Chartreuse. Poor old London! Really the Continent doesn't know you, and those who know you best praise you by negation. I suppose it is a racial characteristic, our passion for dispraise. Dinner over, where shall we go? There is as large an assortment of cabaret shows in London as in any town I have struck. But cut out those that everybody knows and talks of, and come with me to one that is more typical of London's Latin Quarter. We drive to Gower Street, turn into that side street which connects it with Tottenham Court Road, and call a halt at the mews that was, the road of garages that is. The coachman pulls the foaming steeds back upon their haunches, and we fling him a purse! (In modern English the taxi stops, and we give the driver half a crown, because we owe him one and six and have no two-shilling pieces. He, of course, has no change.) Now pick your way carefully among the Rolls Royces and the pretty little Fords, circumnavigate the coster's barrow, an antique perambulator and a pile of egg boxes, and here we are at the Cave of Harmony.

The lady just inside the door as we enter is not a South Sea Islander but a European. In point of fact she is Elsa Lanchester, our hostess—she and Harold Scott run the show. She just happens to be disguised as a cannibal because—hush!—she is going to do a “stunt” in a few minutes. That little girl there is Angela Baddeley; she dances divinely and to hear her sing an Elizabethan folk song (for vivacity and sheer purity of tone) is to wish oneself back in the “spacious days” even though we should sacrifice, in the process of





AT THE "CAVE OF HARMONY"



retrogression, such amenities as taxis, telephones and table manners.

"Table manners?"

"Positively, yes. When the Bravo in Massinger shows the Lady a finger newly severed from his enemy, and she quails, 'Pshaw!' cries he,

'A greedy hand thrust in a dish at court  
Hath sometimes more than this.'

But to-day at Buckingham Palace they show much more restraint."

That little well-groomed fellow who might be a Paris *avocat* is, in point of fact, a poet. He is Roger de Leval, keeping an eye upon contemporary English literature. But besides his poems and his "Essais sur la poésie anglaise contemporaine," he is climbing into fame as a novelist of very modern type. Have you read his "Jazz Band, le Mal du Siècle"? or his "Tu Raseras ta Nuque"? Then you must. I got the first on the bookstall at the Gare St. Lazare when last passing through Paris. Now *that* man you might well take to be a poet. You couldn't take him for anything else. He is a living image of Alfred de Musset. I knew you would say so; everybody says so. In point of actual fact though, he is a bacteriologist. He comes here ostensibly to fox-trot; actually I fancy to take away with him in little pill boxes samples of the atmosphere for analysis for gas. Why can't somebody dislodge a tile or two from the roof? Now *that* very mild and pious-looking gentleman with the pale

blue eyes, pince-nez and nondescript colouring is a horse of a very different colour altogether. You are quite wrong. He has not wandered round from the Y.M.C.A. nor is he a Sunday School teacher. He is London's leading communist; he has strong anarchist leanings. Scotland Yard doesn't like him the least little bit, and if he succeeds in exciting the submerged tenth to revolt he will doubtless be the first to be hanged or guillotined. Touching, is it not, the loyalty which the mob display for those who seek to emancipate it? And there are pretty girls here too! some English, not a few American. One *does* see pretty women in London's Latin Quarter, *n'est-ce pas?*

Excuse a foreign slipslop now and then,  
If but to show I've travell'd; and what's travel  
Unless it teaches one to quote and cavil?

But Elsa Lanchester has vanished; we are due for the "stunt," seize a chair—too late! they are all taken. Remove the cushion from the pianist's chair (now, while he is looking the other way!) and sit down on the floor. Hush! The dear Vicar is introducing the dear Duchess who, in her turn, will introduce Major Augustus Mere, P.T.O.—for that missionary and sportsman will give a short lecture upon his experiences in Gamaria. Tap! The first slide—apparently a reproduction of a Christmas Annual to be entitled "The Hope of the Family,"—shows us the Major in his tenderest infancy, while a beautiful lady whose costume is neither full evening dress nor correct boating costume regards the cot with unnecessary sentimentality. Tap! Slide No. 2 admits us to a glimpse of

the explorer's studious youth. We see him, a touching figure, in velveteen breeches, lace collar and cut-away coat, studying Longfellow passionately, in a grotto, outside Oxford somewhere. "At the back," says Major Mere, in hard dry tones, and indicating the object of interest with his pointer, "you can see very plainly one of the famous 'dreaming spires.' It has come out particularly well in this photograph."

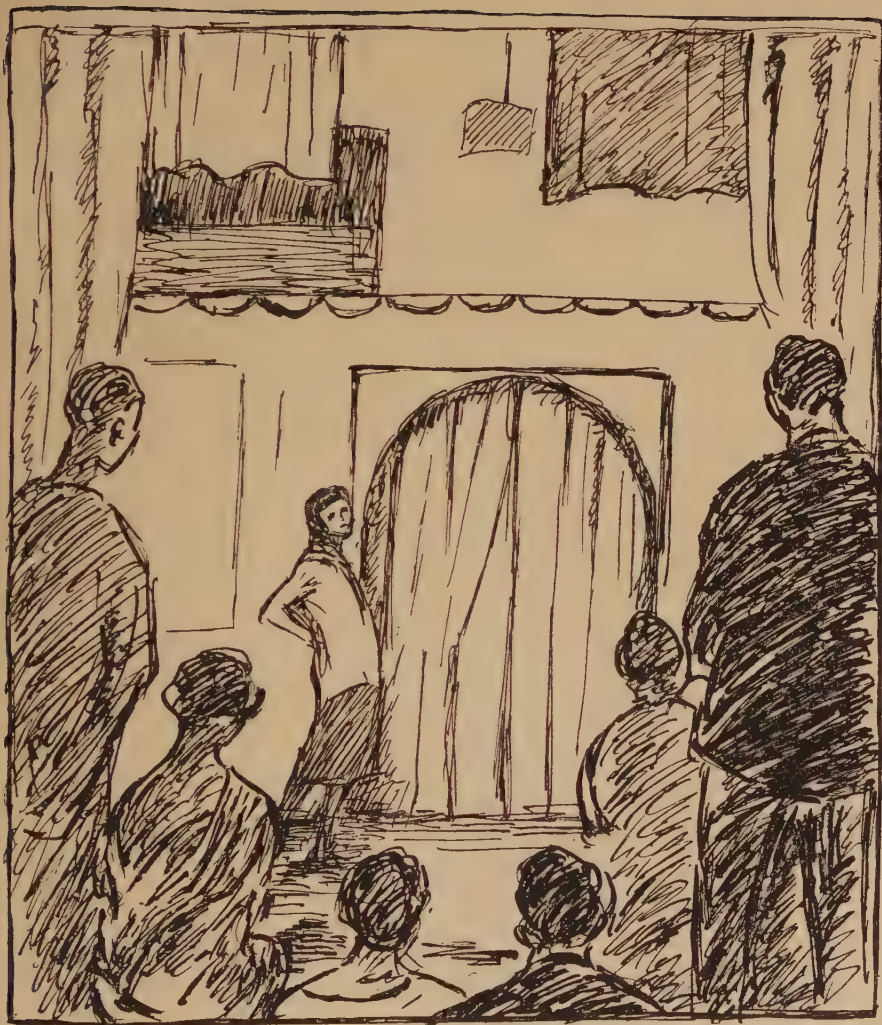
As studious boyhood merges into virile adolescence the Major crosses the Pacific in a Paris steamboat (Eiffel Tower well in evidence) and by tact and suavity insinuates himself into the good graces of the King of Gamaria, who lends him his own chariot and his personal escort of mounted aborigines. Tap! Rotten Row in 1802.—Tight-corsetted ladies on curvetting steeds.—Perhaps the star turn is the slide which depicts an accident which befell the Major's fellow-explorer. We see a saint poised upon a hilltop in ecstatic contemplation of the heavens, whilst a baffled fiend flings himself down from the verge of a precipice. "I was unable," the Major is concluding in his prosiest tones, "to afford the slightest aid to my unfortunate colleague at the time of the tragedy. At the moment when the disaster was taking place I was engaged, as you will perceive in the photograph, in studying a bird." Excellent too, though perhaps not quite so good, was the slide which depicted the Duchess's son transformed by the super-Circean magic of the witch doctor into a cow which retained no vestige of humanity except a top hat. The "intrepid explorer's" slides being now exhausted, he introduces us to some interesting ethnological specimens, to wit, a troop of



cannibals which he has brought with him for the purpose of illustrating the series of lectures with which he is touring the provinces. Native music of course, and native dances—a dance of allurement which is *alluring*; a dance of repulsion which is almost equally captivating. Unfortunately the specimens try to carry off the dear Duchess for the cooking pot, and when she is saved and stowed out of harm's way, they have to be shot. "Is all well?" inquires the patrician lady, languidly re-entering, but crossing the line of fire she likewise falls a victim to the explorer's erratic musketry.

Not very intellectual fooling of course, except for the incidental satire upon the callousness of explorers and the prosiness of lantern lecturers. But what is there that is sometimes irresistibly funny about humour from which all traces of subtlety are vigorously excluded? It appeals to the cave man in us, I suppose. I once saw a comedian playing upon a birch broom as though it were a lyre. Deliberately pulling out a twig, he cried with an air of profound concern, "I've done it now, you know, I've broken a wire," and the house were almost sick with laughter. I cannot diagnose the appeal; I simply state it.

The "stunt" is over and you may dance if you like till the cows come home. There is a good floor, pretty lighting, and a pianist who has been training upon red pepper—but my dear Spaniard, my dear Hidalgo, you are looking thoroughly done up. Never mind, as the whole street is one garage we ought not to be long in getting a taxi. No, no. You are still



CABARET AT THE "CAVE OF HARMONY"



at an immeasurable distance from the Morgue, and bed at the hotel will be more comfortable by far than a slab of wet marble. But I agree with you, one can get quite oddly fatigued in the course of this hum-drum, uneventful, monotonous, Calvinistic London Sunday of ours.

## CHAPTER V

“A course of small, quiet attentions, not so pointed as to cause alarm, nor so vague as to be misunderstood.”

LAURENCE STERNE : *The Sentimental Journey*.

ON returning to Chelsea the young student was surprised to find *writing* upon the shiny surface of his black oak table. A secret society? It hardly looked like it. A rough chalk had been employed to trace the characters, and this was their purport—“Perhaps when I call another time you will have some beer for me and a lobster.”

He had not locked the door on leaving, and could only suppose that the fair unknown had strolled in, intrigued by curiosity. So in future he took the precaution of *not* locking the door. Impractical? No, highly practical. Besides, he had nothing to fear from burglars; everything from char ladies. It was *they* who nourished themselves so heartily with his pork pies, *they* who by the nature of their office held the keys of the citadel, and *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Weeks elapsed. He had forgotten alike the unknown visitor and her singular message. He was leaning against the window trying to decide whether he should emulate William Morris, excel like him in all the crafts but write better poetry,



or whether he should merely take up politics. There was something to be said for the world of affairs of course, but would a seat in the Cabinet spoil his vein for lyric poetry—after all why should it? A pebble struck the window sharply, bringing him from turgid speculation to delightful reality. He told himself that this was *she* and raced downstairs and let her in. Not a day above eighteen, no paint upon the lips—Nature having rendered all such retouching ludicrously superfluous—and hair of the pale gold of the Australian gold pieces which they used to alloy not with copper but with silver. Her eyes were blue, so blue and so absolutely innocent that the young fellow suspected her at once of being capable of any villainy.

She introduced herself as “The little girl you must have seen as Carmen,” and he vaguely remembered a carnival scene in some tenth-rate play he had had to review. She had danced in Spanish costume and a gallant had thrown her a rose. The stage-setting had been evocative of the Parisian underworld. She was a London approximation to that Parisian type the apache, a type which London is too respectable to produce. Respectable? Even so. The dream of the English Bohemian girl, if she come from the people, is to live in a “dinkie” house—a house that is where everything is rich and shallow and showy and above all respectable, and in deplorably bad taste.

The dream of the English light o' love is likewise to be respectable. Her courtiers assure us that her early graduation in the great school of reality restrains her from doing

anything headstrong, or romantic. They do not see in her an adventuress, but a lady strangely devoid of temperament and of a radically defective technique. Professors of Natural History are not agreed as to whether her favourite literature be *La Vie Parisienne* or *The Pilgrim's Progress*, but they are unanimous in declaring that of all plants she is most partial to the Aspidistra. "In England"—whose mot is that? I think George Carr's—"In England the very dogs are respectable!"

One of Carmen's escapades was her treatment of the old general whose passion for her was notorious. The unhappy old gentleman was besotted on her. He took her everywhere in his car, loaded her with presents, while she bullied him outrageously in return, exulting in her power to do so. Odd how women prize their ability to vex and how low they rate their capacity for rendering men rapturously happy. To know that it is in her power to ill-treat a man, and yet not to lose him, is exquisite balm to the soul of a woman,—to be able to treat him abominably, yet know him too much in love to quit her. Sometimes he does, though, and then it is the woman's turn to suffer, for her exasperation at having bungled the job by her lack of tactics, is augmented to agony by the suspicion, usually well founded, that her best friend is consoling the runaway for *her* brutality. This is what is meant by "poetic justice." The unwilling devotion of a tortured slave is the highest compliment woman can elicit from man, and when she exacts it from him he will do well to purchase weed killer and make it up in neat little packets.

"Carmen," having selected a fine camel's hair brush, purchased a pot of black enamel, and proceeded to paint a spider's web upon the general's bald head. She kept him with her until she had fanned it dry, and then informed him that, if he did not wear it a fortnight to prove his love for her, she would never speak to him again ; and she meant what she said.

In the mess the old fellow displayed a creditable adroitness. Complaining of cold in the head, and not finding himself so young as he was, he hoped they would see no objection to his wearing his cap. But the darling had written round to most of his young subs telling them all about it. Thus even so simple an action as wearing a hat when he had a cold, gave rise to suspicious merriment, and was subversive doubtless of military discipline. Nemesis, however, was on the watch.

Across one corner of the young student's apartment the previous occupant had fixed a triangular deal shelf, studded with huge iron hooks, picked up as a "lot" perhaps at some sale of building materials. These hooks served to support trousers and overcoats, and when in use the weight of the shelf was considerable.

Carmen had looked in one evening after the show. She was in great fettle, calling the young fellow by her pet name of "little Frenchman." Beer and lobster, her inevitable regale—what a quaint creature she was!—stood ready to hand upon a corner of the oak table. The arm-chair had been thrust under the triangular shelf which served it for

canopy, and over the chair back trailed the ends of such garments as depended from the iron hooks. Carmen flung herself into the chair, kicked up her heels, laid her golden head upon the end of a pair of trousers—and down came the shelf! The student had leapt to his feet to avert the disaster, but too late. Carmen rose at the sound, half turned her head, an iron hook struck her left temple, and now she lay full length upon the floor, as though pole-axed.

There was no brandy in the room, but there *was* a small public house at the corner. Midnight had struck, however; the shutters were up; and, though the demented fellow kicked and kicked the panels with vicious violence, he did not succeed in staving any of them in. He was forced to return empty-handed. There she lay, still unconscious. Dead perhaps? Stranger things had happened. He took her by the waist, raised her gently, let the head dangle to create a flow of blood to the brain. He opened door and windows to produce a draught. He burned two packets of feather pipe-cleaners beneath her nose. He sprinkled water. At last the eyes opened, staring glassily. She pressed the palm of one hand against her temple which revealed an ugly jagged cut. "And to-morrow," said she, "I've got to go to a wedding!" That was all. Then she rose to her feet unsteadily and was very sick.

She took the disaster in wonderfully good part—too dazed perhaps to recriminate—and, as the finances of the pair even when pooled did not suffice for a cab, they just walked back together to her lodgings, which lay a good half-mile to the



*He regained Chelsea as the early sparrows were twittering in their vigorous matin efforts to secure the early worm.*





far side of Langham Place! How tough is Youth! How well inspired was that poet of the Renaissance who likened Youth's arm to a hazel stick! He regained Chelsea as the early sparrows were twittering in their vigorous matin efforts to secure the early worm. Exhausted by his emotions he paid little heed to their concert; but, as he sank to slumber in the grey of morning, he fell to wondering what would have befallen the general had that aged warrior and not himself been the innocent cause of the catastrophe? Perhaps his car of love would have glided all the smoother. Perhaps she would quite calmly and deliberately have cut his throat.

Marguerite arrived in Chelsea during the early months of the Great War, having duly impressed upon the old folks in Canada the paramount necessity of her "doing" her "bit" for the "boys in khaki." Her parents gave way of course; had they resisted the result would have been the same. Marguerite, with her blue eyes, and her corn-coloured hair, made a more humorous, more cynical, more vital and less wistful, refined and contemplative version of Mrs. William Morris—in fact, she did *not*, upon second thoughts, resemble that deceased paragon in the faintest degree except in the particular of colour. In certain respects she was rather to be likened to the lady in Rossetti's poem, for she was "fond of a kiss" and not markedly averse to "a guinea."

She obtained a little "job of work," clerking in the place of some male employé who had joined the colours. A fortnight of business routine allayed her curiosity which had

never been poignantly excited by this branch of man's activities. She declined further co-operation with the great world of practical affairs. Not until she was lacking "visible means of support" did she appear to sustain herself luxuriously.

She took unto herself a flat, draped it with orange silk, embellished it with a quantity of polished brass-work, and installed the telephone and the electric light. A palatial affair, I assure you, after the Chelsea "bed-sitter."

"And what do your people think of your new job?" inquired an art student with a bent for waggishness.

"They don't know, Kid, they're in Canada and not likely to leave it in a hurry."

"And your brother?"

Marguerite's face changed colour.

"My big brother, you know. I've seen him. I was mortally afraid he might knock me about. One evening I came home—I wasn't with a friend luckily—and found him waiting on the door-mat outside my flat. I didn't want to let him in, but he wouldn't take 'No' for an answer.

" 'You might show me over your digs. after my coming all these miles to see you.' "

"So I let him in.

" 'Gee! They do you proud at that office of yours! I didn't know clerking over here was such a paying concern. What do they give you now, a year?' "

" 'Well, I can't say just right off the reel! ' "



*I took him to a show,  
to the Coliseum*





“ ‘ What d’you mean “ can’t say ” ? ’

“ ‘ Not *exactly*, that is, first go off ! ’

“ ‘ Well, roughly, give a fellow an idea.’

“ ‘ Well, I suppose I get less than the most and more than the least.’

“ ‘ What d’you mean, “ less than the most and more than the least ” ? ’

“ ‘ Oh, you fair give me the headache with all your questions ! Stow it, you old boob, and take me to a show.’”

“ So *I* took him to a show, as he didn’t know London, at the Coliseum—Two returned tickets—Stalls. Went there on purpose, see ? Thought, if he wanted to knock me about, he might try it on *there*, and they’d throw him out for his pains.”

And Marguerite smiled, just such a look of callous guile as one may suppose the Jackdaw of Rheims to have exhibited when he deposited the ring in his nest and before the curse of the Lord Archbishop began to operate.

“ Then I let him have it without any beating about the bush. As it had to come out, better there than anywhere else. He just *looked* at me. I saw in his eyes he was in two minds to be at me. He would have throttled me if he could. That’s his style all over. I wouldn’t have bet a bob that he wouldn’t have fair twisted my head off, but there were all the people and he just daren’t. That sobered him up, you see.”

And there was a repetition of the Jackdaw’s cunning smile.

“ ‘ Why d’you do it ? ’ he asked hoarsely. And he just,

sat back in his chair with tears pouring down his cheeks. And what made it all the worse for him was a funny man was singing 'Hullo! Hullo! Who's your Lady Friend?' And it seemed like as though he was looking at *us*."

Two young fellows had dropped in at the studio, the one a sculptor, the other a dramatic critic. The latter, oddly enough, was a man of means, so he had got himself called to the bar, from a praiseworthy desire to get acquainted with so much law as might suffice him to defend his property against all comers.

"Just back from the Courts," said he, ensconcing himself upon an upturned packing case, thinly disguised as a chair by means of two cushions and an ancestral Paisley shawl. "Been seeing our bright little friend, Marguerite."

"Have you, though? What's *she* doing these days?"

"Three months, if I heard correctly, shoplifting in the West End."

And that's the last so far as one knows that Chelsea has seen or heard of Marguerite.

Perhaps we were unjust to reproach England with excessive respectability. Respectability, like Beauty, is only skin deep. It is just a *manner*. So upon second thoughts, then, we will allow England to have her apaches like other civilized communities.

The Great War, that over-rated brawl, was over at last, and the painter was 'detailed' to represent his battalion at the great ball at Brussels. "No beastly patrols this

time," thought he, "detailed to a *dance*, that is 'detailing' with some sap in it." So he proceeded to make himself as clean as might be without soap, a commodity unobtainable in his village and which the battalion had perforce dispensed with for three whole weeks. Having "reported" at the correct map reading, he ensconced himself, with others similarly detailed to represent other battalions, upon the top of a London omnibus. And the party set forward in great fettle, the driver doing his best to emulate a Derby winner. Snow everywhere, snow falling steadily, the ground white as a tablecloth, and nearly ninety miles to cover. The revellers lay flat upon the roof of their omnibus, for the Germans, during their period of occupation, had stretched telephone wires across the streets which cleared *their* lorries with space and to spare, but were just too low to clear a London motor-omnibus. Were one to sit up normally these wires would cut one's throat. A pity to be guillotined—then one could not go to the ball!

Brussels at last! Cheering crowds, an air of delirious jollity, of glorious abandonment, and now they pulled up in the great market square before the mediæval Town Hall. The young artist entered and Fairyland opened before him. Belgian society had poured out its wit, its valour, its courtliness and its beauty to welcome the Allies. And these women were the first women the painter had seen for six months past, save only rare Flemish peasants whom an English charwoman from the suburbs of a manufacturing town would have quizzed for their lack of style.

And even these peasants by the automatic working of some unwritten law had been tacitly made over to the Sergeants' Mess. Now all that was changed. Here were great ladies and débutante daughters doing the honours "with nymph-like step," while all the cunning of *costumiers*, jewellers, milliners, hairdressers, perfumers, shoemakers and hosiers had been put under request. More, a government blissfully ignorant of Calvin and Pussyfoot, his Prophet, had commandeered all the champagne in the town, just to guard against the bare possibility of there being any mistake.

God Lyæus, ever young,  
Ever honour'd, ever sung,  
Dance upon the mazer's brim,  
In the crimson liquor swim ;  
From thy plenteous hand divine,  
Let a river run with wine !

"Avez-vous soif ?"

The painter had seen this officer in the Ypres salient, not then in festival attire, and resembling less a wassailer than a booted, mustachioed Mephistopheles.

Yes, the painter *was* thirsty. He was also, incidentally, chilled to the marrow after eighty odd miles of joy-riding through a freezing air.

"You must not be thirsty, *nom de Dieu*, in the Town Hall of Brussels !" And this courteous commander leads the way to an adjacent bar.

"Il y a un mouvement brutal de ce côté, but patience and courage ! All things yield to military genius !"

After this bar, he was conducted by other acquaintances

to other bars, until, having been called to the bar once too often, he felt that he might tarnish the fair fame of his country were he to fox-trot in that condition, so he took refuge upon a settee between two aged Brigadiers and gave them the benefit of his views on tactics. The dear fellows took all this remarkably well.

The ball was over and the last of the guests were taking their departures when the painter re-emerged once more into the marvellous Gothic market-place. The first flame of morning glimmered upon sculptured alcove and fantastic gable, and upon the Cupids of the Guildhouse of the Brewers engaged, by a fantasy truly Flemish, upon the craft of beer-making. The flower-sellers were up already gossiping upon the cobbles and trimming up their booths with roses against the morning's flower show. Away there beyond St. Gudule the sun was rising, while the moon full opposite, tinged with her faint flame, glimmered rosily like a flushed sea-shell.

The painter had champagne in his head, and the last strains of the music in his ears. Life was rapture, the war was over, and every moment of existence read like a chapter from *The Thousand and One Nights*.

She was looking at him, just a glance and away, but in a moment of intuition he divined a certain sympathy. She must be one of the very last to leave. Perhaps her car had not turned up. She was certainly stranded. It was absurd that she should be alone at this hour and on foot. Perhaps she might let him call her a taxi ?

“ Madame—— ? ”



"Yes."

"May I call you a taxi? If I can be of the slightest service, I beg you to mention it; you will be doing me a favour by making use of me."

"But I live so close, it is simpler to walk, and, as for being alone, the sun is getting up as you see; it will soon be broad daylight."

"Then—please do not think me presumptuous—may I offer you my arm to your door? If this were not the invariable practice in England, you may be very positive I should not suggest it."

"You are an oddly unconventional race in some ways, you English, and more conventional than us in others. But, yes, you may see me to my door. What harm can there be in that?"

So he saw her to the door, and then through a passage to another door, just to hold her little silk bag while she searched for a second key.

It took time to find the key, but found it was at last, and fitted to the hole.

". . . You are adorable!" The painter with hoarse enthusiasm.

"And I find you very well in your little uniform. Il n'y a que les anglais qui savent porter leur toilette," and she bade him begone, a request which he interpreted to mean "Remain."

The sun was high in the heavens when the lady, by a brusque movement, woke him. He looked up drowsily.

What on earth was she at ? “ They are all a trifle cracked, these society women, but *brushing his boots* ! Erotic symbolism ? ‘ I have read of his effects in Galen.’ ”

“ Mais, que faites vous là, madame ? ”

Madame was rapidly falling asleep again, which did not prevent her from scrubbing the great field boots with renewed violence. Soon they would shine like brass.

“ Mais, madame, que faites vous, donc ? What are you doing ? ”

She was so nearly asleep again that she spoke and moved somnambulistically.

“ Que fais-je—fais-je ? ” she queried, “ Je fais ça par routine. Je fais ça dans le restaurant.”

## CHAPTER VI

“ Comment est-ce possible ! ”

Mlle. PAULA LIPPENS.

IT was spring in Chelsea. Spring blew her invisible silver trumpets over the Embankment. Birds twittered in the trees, and in the deep waters the young fishes took to playing at catch-as-catch-can about the deep piers of Battersea Bridge. Spring scattered invisible blossoms over King's Road, and modern Nell Gwynnes sauntered forth in spring muslins, and modern Peter Lelys and Godfrey Knellers followed them, presumably to ask them if they would care to sit for their portraits.

It was even spring in Redcliffe Road and the assassins grew quite human and cordial, and policemen, in the warm expansive evenings, ventured to patrol the street alone and not in couples. And very soon it would be spring also in St. John's Wood.

Petrokowski—so call him because it is not his name—thought to fête the season by purchasing a ham, and he really haggled very little about the price. By a scientific combination of English and Continental meal hours he contrived to be eating ham at almost every moment of the day.



*It was Spring in Chelsea*





His "early morning tea" took the form of ham in bed. At his "premier déjeuner," as at his "English breakfast," ham figured. At twelve o'clock he would take coffee—a Dutch custom—in the form of ham! He had luncheon (ham) and afternoon tea (ham). Dinner, for which he dressed, by tying a napkin about his chin (ham), and supper (ham, ham, ham!).

His little sisters—and what adorably pretty children they were!—would gaze wistfully at their big brother.

"Isn't there going to be any ham for us?" asked Nina, almost tearful.

"Oh, go away!" cried Petrokowski explosively. "Don't interrupt me with your conversation."

But where a single man sets out unaided to eat a whole York ham, he has a rival unseen, but subtly dangerous, who may snatch half the booty from his lips.

Time can reduce the roaring lion's rage  
And the fierce tiger gentle grows with age.  
Antiquity makes hardest rocks decay,  
And everything, alas! (even ham) to Time gives way.

"Mother," said Petrokowski, "I feel I have been rather selfish about that ham."

"We all feel that, Petrokowski," said the old lady.

"Well, then," said the sculptor, brightening visibly, "I am willing to sell you the rest at a most valuable reduction."

"Don't you listen to him, mother!" cried the little sisters in chorus.

"I should not dream of listening to your brother," said the old dame, and went on darning the sock.

Here was an obstacle worthy of the general. Action was called for and "delays have dangerous ends." Petrokowski heaved a deep sigh, went out for a short walk, drank a sherry and bitters, and returned home once more. He reinstated his interrupted routine of repasts, and Time, who made a prey at last even of Hercules, was fairly put to the worst of it by a modern sculptor's knife and fork. At the end of the week so little was left of the ham that the bone appeared to have been bleached as though by some patent process. Petrokowski was slightly pale, perhaps a thought more bloated. There were no other significant signs, and perhaps even these were due, in some degree, to fancy. We all watched him very curiously, but nothing seemed to happen.

When Grace Darling of immortal memory set off in an open boat, and with no assistance save that rendered by the aged grey-beard her father, rescued survivors from the sinking wreck, every one cried—"They're off again! Oh, she's a marvel, that girl! What are they filming now?" Or at least—*no* they *didn't*. The Critic Jones is cautioning me that I am apt to be inexact with my chronology.

But yet, as far as sheer physical courage goes, feats are daily achieved which are very much in the Grace Darling vein. Trick riding, for instance, and trick diving for the films. Edna Athya specializes in this department of film work. At critical junctures she will be substituted for a less strenuous heroine

and the audience none the wiser. She takes a little horse exercise now and then,—for choice along the mouldering walls of some decaying Abbey, or up and over a railway embankment, particularly if a night express happen to be passing, and while thus employed she is commonly pursued by bandits.

This colloquy was overheard in a Redcliffe Road studio :

*A Friend.* Hullo ! you've been getting your hair shampooed again.

*Edna Athya.* No, but I haven't had much time to dry it and get it tidy. The fairy grotto scene. A sixty-foot dive from my platform to the tank.

*The Friend.* How awful ! I shouldn't like to dive into your tank even from that mantelpiece.

The police have some obscure objection to film stars either diving or being thrown by villains over Waterloo Bridge. Such incidents do nothing to relieve the congestion of traffic. Besides, the currents round the piers are tricky. For this reason Kew Bridge is frequently substituted and the film faked afterwards to resemble the other.

One morning very early, when there were few people in the streets, you might have beheld a young lady in a fawn tailor-made complete with such accessories as shoes, stockings, sunshade and fashionable hat, walking up and down Kew Bridge wringing her hands. A policeman approaches, and the dignity of his salute is impaired by a wink and the broadest of smiles. A gentleman, with a cigar in one hand and a megaphone in the other, entreats him to take himself off,

as it will not do for him to appear on the film. And so the constable has a new experience. He is "moved on." The young lady's mental agony appears now to have reached a climax. She climbs the parapet of the bridge with difficulty—since the parapet is high and the lady what is called *petite*—and flings herself over. Down, down, down, splash! And then down again, through the turbid water, till the bed of Thames ooze is reached. Now she fights her way back towards daylight, striking out frantically. She reaches the surface, shakes the water from her eyes and ears, and is in the act of making for the bank when the gentleman with the megaphone cries with the utmost moral indignation: "Don't swim—*drown!*"

So Edna Athya "drowns," throwing up her hands and sinking, only glancing at rare intervals towards the gentleman with the megaphone for any further instructions. "Oh, don't stop—*drown!*" he exclaims, in tones which seem to imply, "You know, this girl doesn't understand English!" But one cannot go on indefinitely rising and sinking in running water, particularly when fully clad, and after a prolonged spell of this uncanny exercise Miss Athya eventually *does* drown, or at least comes so remarkably near to it as to be picked up unconscious by a Thames Conservancy steamer. She has sundry scars on her head where she has run herself unwittingly against submerged stakes and the like, or where she has struck bottom when the water has been too shallow. But the thick bobbed hair conceals these battle relics from the impertinent Peeping Tom. How pleasant it must be to be

one of the leisured classes who provide a strenuous world with its after-dinner amusements, one of those happy mortals who never have to go to the office to do real work !

Her hobby, when she gets time to indulge in it, is winter sports. To dispense with the ordinary laws of gravity through the medium of a bob-sleigh, to fall gently off the side of an icy world at some sixty miles an hour with one boy in front to bungle the steering, and another at the back to try his hand at the brakes, *that* is the recreation which best calms her nerves after the toils of the theatrical season. It is all so restful—rest and peace. One can give oneself up entirely to reverie, to reverie and dreams. Something like what fishing up a Thames backwater must be to Nokes or Stiles.

I have a horror of what our ancestors used very pertinently to designate “ trunk hose wit,” wit, that is to say, which consists of taking a “ joke ” bodily from a comic paper and thrusting it bodily into the conversation. On the other hand, I am very readily delighted by the inevitable incongruities of everyday experience when narrated by a humorous observer. For the raw material of humour is life itself ; the nearer the well-head the brighter, the farther withdrawn from it the muddier.

Miss Hilda Cowham is an observer who talks delightfully.

“ An acquaintance once called on me whilst at work. ‘ Where do you copy your drawings from ? ’ she asked.

“ I was once asked to state, for an interview which was to be published, ‘ Which of the Services do you prefer ? ’



I naturally replied, 'The Navy.' Apparently my reply was not at all what was expected. The question was which of the *Church services* I preferred. The reporter represented the *Parish Magazine*.

"I am inundated by requests for autograph drawings. One day when feeling very tired of it, I sat down and wrote in reply that I would do a drawing on receipt of ten shillings which I would give to a charity.

"The reply came back: They were very sorry, they only had two and six a week pocket-money, which all went in tuck. I sent the autograph drawing, feeling rather small.

"A rather unusual incident happened to me a short while back. I was invited to tea at a girl's studio, a very unpretentious apartment in a mews. I had only met her once, and on entering the studio I was struck with the number of cases, large glass ones, containing some of the most beautiful specimens of old china. I remarked on these and was told, 'Oh yes, Father collects old china; that bit there is unique. There is only one other piece in existence and that's in the British Museum. Father gave three hundred pounds for *that* vase at the Ashburnham sale, and so on.' I thought it rather strange that such a valuable collection should be housed in such a confined space.

"I had tea, and after a while prepared to take my leave. 'But you'll wish to see Father, he won't be long,' said my hostess.

"So being rather curious to see the owner of so many treasures, I waited. I imagined that he would be tall, delicate

and sensitive looking. Fancy my astonishment when in came a rough, shaggy, jolly, haphazard man in slouchy clothes and taking snuff ! But—out of the loveliest old silver snuff-box.

“ I remarked on his collection, and he unlocked the cases and took out the most delicate egg-shell pieces, handling them lovingly with his great thick hands. He told me before I left that his job was making reinforced concrete. I have never seen or heard of him since.”

If you don't know Edgar Lander, you don't know Chelsea. I have no wish to be peremptory, but—in fine—so it is. To picture the “ Village ” without “ Uncle ” would be as difficult a mental feat as to imagine the Guildhall disassociated from Gog and Magog. He is symbolic Chelsea. He is as much Chelsea as a shepherd in Chelsea china, or Caxton Hall, or the ‘ Six Bells,’ or the coffee stall at the north end of Battersea Bridge.

“ Uncle ” is what the feuilletonistes love to call the “ effeminate artist type.” I suppose they are right, for he has never quite attained six foot in stature, although this blemish is less noticeable than might be supposed owing to his being rather broad and square. He takes no exercise whatever, except such as is afforded by fifteen-mile walks in the country, and all-night dances when in town. The stiffness of his left arm was caused, it is believed, by his having received a German bullet through the elbow. A plain hint, you would say, that the Germans were not desirous of making his further

acquaintance—a hint which with characteristic lack of delicacy he thought fit to disregard. It is supposed that the poet of the *Ingoldsby Legends* borrowed from Edgar Lander certain traits for his portrait of Count Hermann. It was Lander, *not* the Count, who

Smoked like a chimney, and drank like a Merman.

We were discussing pre-War Chelsea, the other day in the very worst vein of the *laudator temporis acti*.

“Before 1914,” he lamented, “a pound bought all delights. A man could take himself and his lady friend to an inn, stay there till 12.30 and then push off somewhere else to a ‘binge.’ Binges lasted more than twenty-four hours then. One moved, as food and drink ran out, from one studio to another. Men went to the Red Revel dances dressed as Dutchmen or Pierrots, stayed as such for a week, leading off at Sloane Square and ending up in World’s End Passage.”

“Do you remember, Uncle, the Redcliffe Restaurant before it came under ‘entirely new management’? And do you remember your sudden appearance there one evening, attired as a cardinal, all complete with bottle? Your immediate bodyguard consisted of a French Aristo snatched from the guillotine, a Chaucerian gentleman in tights, a ballet-girl, a Pompadour, Mother Goose, and a lady in pyjamas and an ostrich feather.

“Do you remember Mario? *That* was a waiter for you! We shall never look upon his like again, except, of course, upon the musical comedy stage where I rather fancy he



*. . . Stay there till 12.30 and then push off somewhere  
else to a 'binge.' . .*





first graduated in the art of waiting. He struck the *right* note. So sympathetic of him! He would advance upon us juggling with the plates—a really creditable performance. Then he would carry the plates away with him to do a trick, and then—he would bring them all back again. The idea was dawning upon him that we might be wanting a meal.

“ ‘Well, Mario, something *à la carte*. What about the dishes in this column?’ ”

“ Mario regarded the bill of fare with more than Tennysonian ‘honest doubt.’ ”

“ ‘All delusions,’ I can hear him saying, ‘imposture, gentlemen, they exist only in the imagination of the chef!’ ”

“ ‘We’ll cut out *that* column then entirely. What’s this like? Any good?’ ”

“ ‘I shouldn’t recommend *that*, sir.’ ”

“ ‘Good Lord, Mario, is there anything you *do* recommend? What about *this*?’ ”

“ ‘Now you are getting warm, sir. This I can confidently recommend and that, and’—lowering his voice—‘*that* I should *particularly* recommend.’ ”

“ It was, for all the world, like being let into some valuable racing secret by one who has private acquaintanceship with stable-men and jockeys.

“ I remember trying to learn Italian from Mario. ‘What’s your name for this fish?’ I would ask.

“ ‘We have no name for it. When we catch such a fish as *that*—we just throw it back into the sea.’ And the

shrug with which he would accompany this negative summing-up was worth alone a guinea a night."

"The Redcliffe was not the only restaurant," mused Uncle. "Arthur Ransome discovered the Rendezvous in Soho, and for a short while all Chelsea went there. After that it was Roche's. Roche's offered a prize of twenty one-and-sixpenny dinners for the best design for their bill of fare. Oh, the heartrendings, and the anxious faces, and the long discussions as to how the prize was to be eaten! Should the dinner be consumed all at a sitting—at a 'binge,' in short, to which twenty of the noblest and brightest spirits of the age should be convoked—or should the dinners be eked out? Should they be consumed just two at a time, in company with the blissful angel of the blissful minute?"

"By Jove! Yes. I had forgotten Roche's and their famous menu. What happened after all? For the life of me I can't remember."

"The prize," said Uncle, articulating very slowly with a strong man's effort to keep himself under control, "did not go to Chelsea after all. The ways of Providence are inscrutable and verge sometimes upon bad taste. The twenty one-and-sixpenny dinners were knocked down to some bounder in St. John's Wood!"

"Good God!" said I huskily, but in tones from which I trust all trace of manly fortitude was not excluded. It is painful to the Anglo-Saxon to betray, in the presence of another member of the Race, his hypersensitive emotional inner nature which is all the more intense from the restrictions

which the code of good society lays upon it. Yet such flashes of self-revelation show, in one moment, the stuff of which the man is made. We are both strong men—far stronger than any two characters in Rudyard Kipling. So we mixed ourselves two stiff brandies with lemon and hot water and brown sugar, and fell to conversing of other matters.

There is a certain bluffness about Lander, which makes him appear, in very esoteric and exclusive coteries, a little like a Harris tweed amidst faded Arras.

“ Just before the War,” I remember him saying, “ Shaw produced *Pygmalion*, and I was invited to a highbrow party where I listened to unlimited praises showered upon the playwright for his masterly use of a certain expletive. We were trying to impress a foreign countess of uncertain nationality and no uncertain age. The door bell rang. ‘ There,’ I remarked, in all innocence, ‘ goes your blasted bell!’ ”

“ My hostess gave me a look and my hat. I am still wondering why I may not say ‘ Blast ’ while Mr. Shaw says ‘ bloody ’! I cannot understand.”

“ The son of a certain publisher bounced into my studio.

“ ‘ Uncle,’ cried he, ‘ my father has just cut me off with a shilling, and *there*,’ cried he—for he had an irresistible inclination towards melodrama—‘ *there* is the shilling!’ He flung down the coin upon my table.

“ I clawed the shilling up of course, and headed a procession to the Goat and Boots.

"A week later, a new development. His father had cut him off again. Of late days this has become quite a monomania of his. He is always doing it."

Lander's definition of a "foreigner" is not that given in the New English Dictionary. "A foreigner," says he, "is a person not living in Chelsea."

"I remember a foreigner inviting me to dine with him at a Club in Piccadilly. I arrived at the marble portico tastefully attired for the occasion in blue serge, and inquired for my host from a highly supercilious hall porter.

" 'What name am I to announce, sir? ' "

" 'Tell him "Uncle," ' said I, using my nickname without thinking.

"The change that came over the fellow was really astonishing. Did he recognize the Master? Had he always worshipped my etchings from afar? It was all a mystery. With what anxious servility did he usher me into the waiting-room, and poke the fire, and proffer me the evening paper!

"Later in the evening, when the coffee and liqueur stage had been reached, I asked my host if he had a *real* uncle.

" 'Why, yes,' said he, 'the old boy is Earl of ——.' "

"Some indeed have greatness thrust upon them.

"I wonder if anybody, these days, takes an old A.B.C. and carefully tearing out the leaves, and folding each one neatly, assumes an expression of decent reverence, and walking slowly down the King's Road hands a page to every passer-by with the whispered desire that he will take it home and read it earnestly? A rare experience for the

physiognomist! The heavily tactful gentleman shows in his countenance his anxiety to humour the poor fellow. And then the looks of active astonishment, of stupid wonderment, of panic terror, of moral indignation! While, upon very rare occasions, a sudden wild gleam in the eye shows that you have distributed a leaflet to one who believes himself a fellow in your craft—a brother revivalist.

“Human curiosity impels them all at least to glance at the paper. It requires character to throw it away without just that one glance. Then think of the news you convey! Perhaps the 8.15 from Penge to St. Paul’s is *not* stopping to-night at Sydenham. Before the war this was one of my favourite pastimes.”

One day at dinner Lander found himself confronted by that novelist who is so wealthy as to be able to permit himself the hobby of being a Bolshevik. The English Bolshevik exploits the capitalistic system in his own interests, while undermining it in those of his children. Our propagandist was deploring that very middle-class notion that anybody can have a right to his own property, when “Uncle” making a “long arm” twitched from his pocket a particularly fine silk handkerchief.

“What’s the great idea?” asked John Bull Trotsky.

“Nobody has any right to property. I’m a Bolshevik.”

“But I hope, ‘Uncle,’ you are going to give him back his handkerchief?” inquired the hostess, with persuasive sweetness.

“I don’t understand. He *has* no property. I could



take his trousers. He can take anything of mine—if he can get it.”

And so when the ladies left the room, “A *capital* joke about my handkerchief,” says J. B. T. “But you *are* going to let me have it back *now*, I hope?”

“Joke? What joke? I don’t understand you, Comrade.”

I believe Lander still sports the handkerchief on gala occasions.

In the old days “Uncle” had one residence in Town and one abroad in foreign parts, or to be more explicit, a studio in Chelsea and a bungalow at Shoreham. His near neighbour at Shoreham was Percival Gibbon, then contributing to *McClure’s Magazine*.

“McClure is coming down to see me,” Percival would say.

“Don’t tell lies, Gibbon,” I would remonstrate—for Gibbon is Welsh.

Then one day, to my extreme surprise, I received a note from Percival which informed me that the millionaire had actually arrived and was now *in situ*.

“Come along,” it said, “and help talk to McClure.”

So I toddled round and found the pair of them bathing. I undressed and swam out to them. The millionaire was an insignificant little blighter. I was struck by a sudden fancy. “I’ve never drowned a millionaire yet,” I reflected aloud, and I plunged the little fellow under the water.

When Gibbon saw what I was doing he behaved with a quite Continental lack of self-restraint. “Stop that, you

damned fool!" he cried, splashing towards me frantically, "you're *drowning my income!*" So far "Uncle."

But this to me is the strangest part of this strange story. When the pair got McClure back to the beach, he seemed immensely tickled by this treatment, and laughed loud and long. If I discover that William James, the philosopher, has written a work on the psychology of millionaires, I shall send to the library for it and study it carefully.

Have you met McBey, the etcher and portrait painter? If you have *not*, you will none the less believe that you *have*, when you are introduced to him for the first time. When you have racked your brains to remember the time and place of that first meeting, it may dawn upon you that what you saw before was not McBey at all, but the portraits of Beethoven, the musician. *His* likeness you will have seen in the music shops if nowhere else, and McBey—alike for eyes, features, and general conformation of the head—is the incarnation of that classic master. As to the rest of the anatomy, I am not prepared to be dogmatic. Was Beethoven *burly*? I have never seen the musician portrayed full length. *Burly* is the just word for McBey. He is Scotch, and true to type.

When he first visited England as a very young man and saw the great capital— No, Reader, you are wrong, your guess does you no sort of credit whatsoever! I am *not* going to narrate to you the early struggles of one of the modern Whittingtons—a tedious brood and prolific. They breed like

rabbits. McBey arrived in London neither hatless nor barefooted, but reasonably well shod and wearing what is called a "Trilby hat" like any business man or murderer. While as to ready money he might happily be compared with the illustrious Ali Baba entering upon a new terrain rich with the spoils of the Robbers' cavern, for he stood upon the platform surrounded with a quantity of stout little cases which contained, precisely, twenty thousand pounds in golden sovereigns!

For McBey, as the employé of a bank in Scotland, had been despatched to convey this paltry sum to some other bank in London, but since the bullion-waggon which he had been told to expect had not turned up, and since he had received no other orders than to expect it—not so much even as the name of the bank to which the money was to be transferred—he began to feel restive and perplexed. They are not very resourceful, these Scotsmen. He did not do what any Southerner would have done immediately, namely voyage to one of the South American republics via the Continent, Ostend, Dover, and Messrs. Clarkson of Wardour Street. He showed no initiative; was strangely uninspired. He just obtained an ordinary van of the Carter Paterson, or Pickford type, had all those treasure chests stowed aboard, and—Oh, Lord! to think of it!—tamely instructed the driver to take him to the Bank of England, the manager of which he had always understood to be a singularly honest fellow. But I must not make you miserable with this tale of a great opportunity lost irrevocably, for McBey is an *artist*, and as



James McBey

... it may dawn upon you that what you saw before was not McBey at all but the portraits of Beethoven . . . McBey—alike for eyes, features and general conformation of the head—is the incarnation of that classic master.





such may be pitied and pardoned, for his singular deficiency of business initiative and "push."

He purchased a large map of London and ticked off the names of the streets as he passed through them, just to see that he was getting nearer the Bank of England and not farther away from it. For, as the bullion-waggon had never repaired to the station as arranged, it was always possible that the van which he had procured as a substitute might be there *by design*. Remember he had never visited London before in his life, and he knew nothing of the driver and conductor of this vehicle. What if they were tricksters conducting him to the river with intent to push him in, having first dealt him a good swinging blow on the head? "If that is their game and they pull it off, why then," reflected the unhappy McBey, "*they* will not even be suspected. It will just be thought that *I* have absconded." However, his work upon the map assured him he was now in effect approaching his goal.

"Are you expecting a consign of gold?"

"Pour it in," responded the phlegmatic representative of the Bank of England, "it's bound to come to us sooner or later."

So McBey employed four solid hours in the arduous task of pouring the "precious bane" down a little shoot and into an underground safe.

"Now give me a receipt."

"What do you want a receipt for?" inquired the employé with regrettable levity. "A *receipt*, for *that* little sum? *What* a notion!"

But McBey insisted upon some sort of written acknowledgment, for after all it was not a postal order for half a crown which he had just pushed over the counter. So the clerk forwent the joy of leg-pulling and inscribed a code word for him to present his Scottish Bank Manager as proof of *bona fide*—a word which, since he was not acquainted with that particular code, meant just as much, and just as little to him, as the “Dies mies, Hocus Pocus” of the Conjuror out of the *Ingoldsby Legends*.

When young McBey returned to the land of whisky, Bibles and bonny lasses, he inquired of one of the staff why no notification of his arrival had been dispatched to the London bank for which the gold was destined, warning them to send out the bullion waggon to meet him?

“But a notification *was* sent. We *wired*. I wired *myself*—er——No! my mistake. Sorry,” and the defaulter drew from his pocket that telegraph form which he had forgotten to hand in at the office!

You know they are for ever making such mistakes, these sound practical men. But you see there is a conspiracy to hush them up. Were a poet to trespass in this fashion, the fact would be noted in every biography written of him, and the world would never tire of talking of it.

You may remember that during the War McBey was one of the official artists upon the Eastern Front. When Emir Feisul began first to make a name for himself as a usurper—amongst other titles he had claimed for himself that of “King of Damascus”—McBey, considering that it would be a good

stroke of policy to paint his portrait, obtained leave of absence from the authorities, and set forth upon his quest.

He beheld the Emir employed after our most cherished traditions of Oriental romance, seated upon a divan in an audience chamber of state, and occupied in distributing boons to greedy merchants. And since his title to his crown and possessions was by no means well substantiated, since it was manifest that he must be zealous in securing and retaining adherents to his faction, these men of commerce trimmed their sails to the breeze and became more pressing.

Now when an interpreter informed the Emir that one of His Britannic Majesty's official artists was at hand desirous of painting his portrait, he was overjoyed at the loophole for escape thus offered. So, on the plea of business of the most pressing nature, he postponed the audience till some future date and decamped from the presence of these boon-begging rascallions with a profound sigh of relief.

"The Emir," says McBey, "was the worst sitter I have ever had. He was a bag of nerves and seemed quite unable to keep still for two minutes together. When I told the interpreter that he must tell the Emir to *sit still*, it dawned on me that the wretched creature was too frightened of his master to pass on my message correctly.

" 'Tell him he *must keep still*,' I would say.

"What the interpreter actually said on these occasions God knows. He probably observed that I kissed the ground before the feet of His Majesty the King of Damascus—on

whom be peace—and ventured to suggest that the weather was seasonable for the time of year.

“ But this style of interpreting, though much practised, is of no sort of use to anybody.

“ So I dispensed with the interpreter's services and becoming more and more absorbed by my work, and knowing no Arabic, I frowned and glared and gesticulated with passion at every indication however faint that my sitter desired once more to recommence squirming and wriggling. For one good hour and a half I kept him to it, and then—standing well back from the portrait and comparing it with the model—I beckoned to him that I was satisfied with the likeness and that the sitting was at an end. The Emir leaped to his feet, and I now perceived the very concrete cause of his pronounced discomfiture. Oh, absolute but most neurasthenic of usurpers! Oh, shrinking primrose amongst potentates! The Emir all this long while had been sitting upon a door-knob—and he had not dared to protest ! ”

### *Cats of Courtesy.*

The Cat that owns Major Pollard presents his Compliments to the Cat that owns Miss May Sinclair and trusts that he will accept this little joint of catsmeat, with the Compliments of a fellow-member of the St. John's Wood Tiles Club. . . .

The Cat that owns Miss Sinclair presents his Compliments to the Cat that owns Major Pollard, thanking him for his very seasonable gift of Yuletide horseflesh, and wishing him a

Happy Christmas and many of them. Miss Sinclair regrets that she has not been able to get a better impression.

[Signed by an imprint of the Cat's paw.]

Kean Seymour, the poet, had been addressing the "To-day Literary Circle" on the "Poetry of Mr. G. K. Chesterton"—an eloquent address.

Look at us, laugh at us, love us, but do not quite forget  
That we are the People of England who never have spoken yet.

"I think," I whispered, "they have done little else of late days. What of the wretched intellectuals who are for ever exploited because they are too stoical to whine and bellow? *Their* hardships are the last to be considered."

Look at us, laugh at us, love us,  
answered Harry Stuart, the novelist and poet,

but do not quite forget  
That we are the Poets of England who have never been solvent yet.



## CHAPTER VII

“ And in a stage play all the people know right wel that he that playeth the sowdayne [sultan] is . . . a sowter [cobbler]. Yet if one should . . . shewe out of seasonne what acquaintance he hath with him, and calle him by his owne name whyle he standeth in his magestie, one . . . might hap to breake his head . . . for marring of the play.”

SIR THOMAS MORE'S *The history of King Richard the thirde.*

SCENE : *A Dressing Room at Drury Lane Theatre during a Shakespeare Revival.*

*Discovered* MISS ATHENE SEYLER and MISS EDITH EVANS.

A. S. (*to E. E.*) Let's pretend we can wake up to-morrow and have one wish realized about the theatre ! Your turn first.

E. E. I would have Drury Lane for my own with no shareholders to pay, and do the classics and big modern plays, and I would run off occasionally to a little theatre and play in brilliant modern comedy for a change !

A. S. I would have as a gift, freehold, a theatre like the Haymarket, and collect round me about ten of our sort—no stars.

A VISITOR. What ! No stars ? You would deliberately exclude yourselves from your own theatre !

A. S. & E. E. (*Napoleonic*) Tss !

A. S. I would put on everything good from the eighteenth century to the Expressionists. I would have all scenery and costumes made in the theatre, and no run longer than three

months. I would make the theatre a *home* for drama, actors and audience, so that people came to the theatre, not to see any particular person or play but whatever we were doing there. This would create a living responsible public and——

E. E. Hold on! My turn now! Talking of our generation——

A. S. Were we——?

E. E. It seems to me that one thing we ought to learn in particular from the older school is *style*. They may have done what we think bad theatrical plays, but they carried them through by style and distinction.

A. S. Yes. We may be vital, full of ideals and energy, but do let us keep the form and dignity that they gave to their work. By the way, one of the most distinguished of the older school said to me the other day, "There is not the enthusiasm that the public used to display for the theatre." What do you think?

E. E. I find there is—anyway, enough to encourage us. I think the theatre is just budding out after the winter of the War and post-War conditions. I have faith in the theatre——

A. S. And the public—and anything else? We must have lots of faith because the poor theatre is always the whipping-boy of the arts, and yet if, in the literary world, you get half a dozen first-class books in a year it is considered satisfactory, but, if you have the same number of good plays produced in a year, out of the hundreds of bad ones that are done, every one says that the theatre is going to the dogs! It is very unfair.

E. E. You see, good plays will be written if we actors demand them and try to keep the standard high. I am sure we are going to get a chance to do good stuff if only we keep our minds fixed on it.

A. S. This conversation seems to be developing into a lecture!

E. E. Well, one cannot help getting excited and serious

over the thing one cares more for than anything else. This generation has got to *care* for the *theatre*—not for position, or money, or popularity—but for the *theatre*, and the other things will come through it. Now tell me a funny story about your experiences on the stage, Miss Seyler!

A. S. Don't be *absurd*, Edith, I am a funny story in myself! Anyway, *you*? I belong to a set that does not have "experiences" outside its work and its homes.

E. E. Aren't we a quiet and domestic little lot? We might be called the "Racy Reporter's Ruin" or the——

A. S. "Pale Paragraphist's Perdition"!

## CHAPTER VIII

“ Lifted horizons. . . .”

WALTER PATER.

“ The marvellous subtilty of Bawdes and Innkeepers . . . hard rocks, stony Pillows . . . thieves . . . and great Danger to Life.”

HERMAN KIRCHNER'S *Oration in Praise of Travel*.

Tr. THOMAS CORYATT.

WHAT a vogue Sussex has had of late, and especially since Mr. Kipling and Mr. Belloc set themselves to sing its praises !

I will gather and carefully make my friends  
Of the men of the Sussex Weald.

So sings Hilaire in a ballad as naturally and unaffectedly songful as the tune of a blackbird. Sussex is certainly an admirable suburb of London, and London's Latin Quarter delight to recuperate there in the fresh air and sunlight, when the publisher or theatrical manager, or the rich sitter, or whoever it may be, has shown himself a “ white man ” by signing the cheque. There is a simplicity about the contour line of the downs which appeals to the intellect no less than to the emotions ; they are pure in line as Hellenic sculpture.

The "bold majestic downs, smooth, fair and lonely," inspired the present laureate with stanzas of unmatchable songcraft, but the late poet, Arthur Bell, confessed to me that, with the exception of the staff of the inn where he lived, his enthusiasm for Sussex stopped short at the inhabitants.

Personally I have met some delightful "natives," one was the Scotch proprietor of a London monthly, one was a lady returning from Japan to her home in Arizona, and one was Mr. Frankfort Moore, the Irish novelist. With Mr. Moore, most hospitable of mortals, one loved respectfully to wrangle concerning the merits of Dr. Johnson, for his enthusiasm for Goldsmith blinds him a little, one fancies, to the Doctor's sterling qualities. But—can such people as these claim kindred with the *Saxons* of Sussex? One might live out one's life in Sussex and be regarded to the end by the aborigines as a benighted foreigner. Better ten thousand times take up your dwelling in kindly Devonshire or cross the Channel into sunny Normandy if you seek in the country something of human companionship. During a stay of half a year in a town at the foot of the Weald I found but one native—one *real* native—who seemed disposed to make advances. This was a parson, who, goaded by curiosity, demanded of a lady, a fellow-lodger:

"What might be his profession?"

To which query the lady—a glib liar who did not like it to be supposed that she was not "in the know"—made answer:

"He is something in the chocolate trade."

Chocolates, presumably, are not respectable, for the



surreptitious investigations ceased. Of the native population who were neither Londoners, Scotchmen, Irishmen nor Americans I lured but two from their positions of uncivil aloofness and cunning distrust. These were a sheep-dog and a shepherd. The shepherd had the keener sense of humour, the dog the more spiritual nature. Being informed that two of his near relatives had been accorded temporary relief in Lewes gaol, my shepherd obtained leave to visit them.

"This looks bad," said he, "for the *Family*." This genial fellow I felt to be an exception.

They are keen business people, the Sussexians of the middle and lower classes, and, if you desire to purchase from them, you must haggle and bargain as you would at Budapest or Cairo. The unfortunate of the parable who was relieved by the good Samaritan met with his disaster in Sussex. The Samaritan was in reality a gentleman of good Devonshire stock travelling Sussex in quest of adventures. He lodged the unhappy victim at the inn and as we all know paid the host a penny. The sufferer grew well so rapidly that the Samaritan asked the host for change. But the host presented him with a bill for a penny three-farthings. It had just dawned upon his intelligence that the pair of them were "foreigners" and hence his natural prey.

There is a tradition that William the Conqueror defeated these people at Hastings or somewhere in the vicinity, but there is no trace of that racial admixture which such an occurrence would lead us to anticipate. The Normans,

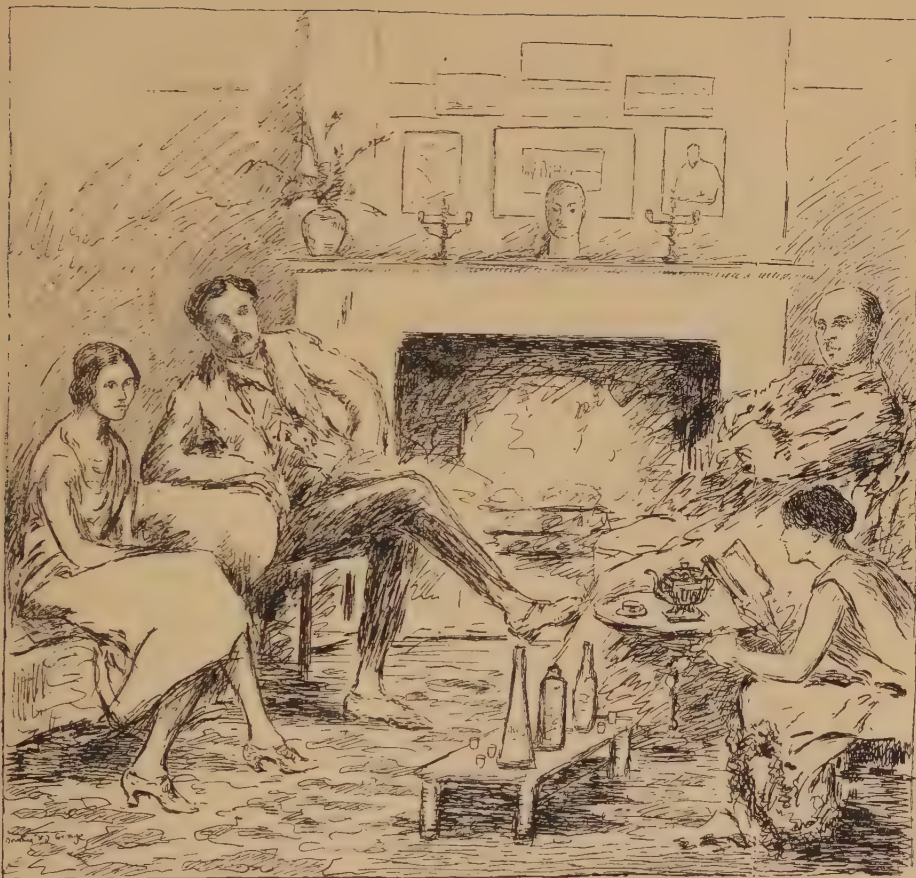
despite Guy de Maupassant, are not invariably grasping. They do not lack politeness. They are the most genial of men. And so, while one sympathizes with William's attitude with regard to Sussex, it is impossible not to regret that he was so poor a soldier and did his work so inefficiently.

But I love Mr. Belloc's prose and poetry and am enchanted by the paradox of his attitude to Sussex—so different from William's. And I would willingly drink with him at one of his Sussex hostelries, could I do so without disturbing *them*.

Whenever, upon a Sunday afternoon, I pass a Sussex inn upon a brisk country walk, at any time between the hours of two and seven, when it begins to grow too dark to see through the windows, I catch a sight of *them* through the windows, the old ladies to whom the inns of Sussex are given over—tea-drinking . . . tea-drinking. . . .

No, I do not like an atmosphere where all is foreign that lies beyond the parish pump.

There is nothing of the parish pump about Stephen Graham. Despite the name you might guess him a Yorkshireman ; the sturdy bluntness of the man, the ruddy cheeks, the sparkling blue eye. You would have some difficulty in divining his age. Such men never grow old. Wherever he may have been born—and Yorkshire is mere surmise on my part—he has not tramped down from Yorkshire when you meet him in Soho. He has more probably just returned from the Caspian, or Mexico, or the Rockies, or the



A "ROUND THE FIRE" PARTY  
AT STEPHEN GRAHAM'S



shore of the Black Sea. He was married in Moscow, spent his honeymoon in Asia Minor, and was shortly after settling down with his wife "Out West" as cowboy and cowgirl.

He has curious intellectual adventures. The country which most engages his attention at the present moment is Abyssinia. He has some notion of tracing Christianity up the higher reaches of the Nile. In these districts, apparently, Christianity proper becomes saturated with Egyptian lore and tradition.

America, in all its length and breadth, he finds the most stimulating country in which to write. "You are always well for at least the first month and for months beyond that, unless you happen to be in New York. In New York the stimulus does not last beyond the month. One becomes bored and must voyage further afield." He likes the spaciousness of America and the tremendously friendly atmosphere.

"In America they call you by your Christian name, and you are arm-in-arm together immediately after being introduced. Whether you like this or not, it keeps the spirit mobile. In England, on the contrary, men seem to dislike each other at sight. Upon an introduction, an Englishman always contrives to give the impression that he is struggling to fight down his repulsion."

The Grahams can be happy for a considerable time in Frith Street, but there always comes an hour when they must get into a train to feel really at home. It is odd to be afflicted with home-sickness for countries one has seen only



upon the map. Stephen will tell you that "Travel gives you the time to read, and to read properly. In Town," says he, "there are too many distractions."

Certainly he is a profound student of Shakespeare and he is supposed, by those who know Russian, to be more than merely conversant with a whole host of Russian authors, classical and contemporary.

"One studies the ways of the people. There is a profound psychological interest. Travel is the quickest way to understand people, and with health and the adventurous spirit, the pleasantest."

All true, one feels, but not the whole truth. It is always difficult for the traveller to put into words the fascination which travel holds out for him. It is one of those things which "break the mesh of language and escape." As reasonably might one attempt to score the mermaid's singing against the next promenade concert at the Queen's Hall. Travel is a mystery, like love. One does not travel to America in the steerage as Stephen did to find a calm atmosphere in which to read how,

Cuckoo buds of yellow hue  
Do paint the meadows with delight,

though I can well believe that Hamlet's reflections on suicide might assume a heightened poignancy through the intense discomfort of the surroundings.

Many of his tramps have been undertaken in the company of fellow men of letters. With one of these, the late Wilfrid

Ewart, author of the *Way of Revelation*, the Grahams made a long tour along the frontier of New Mexico.

“On the Mexican frontier live a number of Indian tribes, their native customs and religion totally unchanged. They have the primitive practices of the days before Cortez. In Central Mexico the majority of the Indians are Catholicized, but along the frontier one may still light on the true stone-age paganism. The Indians pray for everything by dancing, and their dances are beautifully spectacular. Their mythology has never yet been explored by Europeans, and the explanatory matter, if ever given satisfactorily, will fill volumes. They have the most elaborate ritual and symbology in all things done and worn.

“The different tribes speak dialects which cut them off intellectually one from another, but they have a common *lingua franca* in Spanish. They are very hospitable. I have slept in their mud houses many, many times. Their staple diet is Indian corn of different types and blue, pink and yellow maize, which they set upon the roofs of their wigwams to ripen in the sun.”

“What do they drink?”

“The Indians are always very pleased if they can get spirits.”

“Like those other poor dogs, the English,” said I, “in these post-war days.”

“Over the frontier in South-West Mexico they drink Pulque—fermented juice of the Cactus—a distinct and peculiar brewage of which is believed to have destroyed

whole tribes of the Red Indians before ever the Spaniards, landing in the name of Christianity, destroyed a great many more.

“The Mexicans, despite their ceaseless broils, do not decrease in number, because they fight on pulque and do not see straight, but a Mexican duel may be exceedingly dangerous for the passers-by. There are thousands of acres of cactus under cultivation, and the plants, when just mature, are full of a milky juice. There is a right moment for tapping, when a quart to a couple of quarts of juice may be drained straight off. They ferment the stuff with alcohol; the taste is not attractive to an European.”

“What drink does it most resemble?”

“The flavour to my palate more nearly resembles kumiss than anything else.”

“Oh, you travellers!”

“Kumiss? It's mare's milk poured into wooden bottles and fermented. Oh, don't laugh, *it has a kick!* I vagabonded at one time from Tashkent to the Northern spurs of the Himalayas and drank kumiss three times a day. On another occasion I tramped all the Russian shore of the Black Sea. It was marvellously enjoyable. I bathed two or three times a day. I would spread my blankets out and sit and compose articles for the *Evening Standard*, and sketches and short stories. On that tramp I wrote 40,000 words. I usually take bread, tea and smoked sausage, sometimes bacon, but not often. I can't be bothered with cooking things. But of course when I light upon anything good to eat, I lift it.”

“What happened to Wilfrid Ewart? One never seems to come upon him these days.”

“He was shot accidentally during a Mexican jollification. I met him in France during the War, but that’s how he died. The Mexicans are always having public holidays—Christmas, New Year’s night, the festival of the Mexican Virgin, all sorts of occasions, and there’s always a deal of shooting and invariably people killed.”

One of Stephen’s literary tramps took him over the Rockies in company with Vachel Lindsay, whom one remembers at one of Mrs. Lovat Fraser’s At Homes, declaiming with extraordinary vigour :

Mumbo Jumbo,  
God of the Congo,  
Mumbo Jumbo  
Will hoodoo you

(the voice dying away)

Will hoodoo you—

A wild but captivating lyric in which the poet has admirably succeeded by fantastic rhythm, and the device of vowel repetitions, in bearing out the idea of the throbbing of the Congo savages’ drums.

Stephen Graham and Vachel Lindsay set out “at scratch,” as the Corinthians of old loved to express it, and they journeyed north-north-west by pocket compass.

“No roads, just wild Nature,” continues Stephen reminiscently, “and ten days’ rations in the knapsacks before they would need replenishing. Lindsay is a marvellous talker

and reciter. He knows volumes of Swinburne, Keats and Shelley, and he would recite from those divine masters in sublime natural surroundings. You know his tremendous voice ?

“ He regards that tramp as one of the great adventures of his life. He wants to repeat it, but he stipulates for nine hours’ real sleep every night. The cold when we made the journey before often kept us waking. We did all that could be done towards keeping ourselves warm with “ hot rocks.” You know that trick ? You heat great lumps of rock in your camp fire, and when you turn in at night, cover them with your blanket, and they’ll keep warm till day-break. Personally cold doesn’t bother me much, but Lindsay is extremely sensitive to it. One night, despite a quantity of hot rocks, he had crept so close to the camp fire before falling asleep, that he was only awakened by the smoke from his blanket. When he roused himself, he discovered that a hole big enough for you to put your head through had been actually burnt out. He extinguished the smoulder and, still half asleep, wrapped the damaged blanket about his head, to keep his ears from freezing, and dozed off again.

“ He was fated to have an uneasy night. Again his slumbers were disturbed. This time by a diabolical snuffling. ‘ Stephen has caught cold,’ was his mental comment, ‘ and I don’t wonder either ! ’ The snuffling continued till it had become at length quite appalling to listen to. He began to realize that slumber was impossible and sat up to remonstrate with me. It was unnecessary, for I lay stretched out



all my length in silent and unbroken slumber. The real offender was a black bear who had smelt out the bacon and was now engaged in a night raid upon our larder. Lindsay's shouts woke me, and our joint bellowing scared away the intruder. But he did not decamp until he had deliberately flung down such small pieces of camp equipment as we possessed. He threw down everything, rootling about like a great pig. But we didn't let him get the bacon. And yet we might almost as well have done so! For bacon—we had lived upon the stuff until the mere thought of it was enough almost to make us sick. We might just as well have heaved it after the bear. . . . I caught myself dreaming several times of grass as a possible substitute for bacon. Could one live upon the stuff for even a short while, if cooked in any way? At times I really thought of trying. There was always the precedent of Nebuchadnezzar."

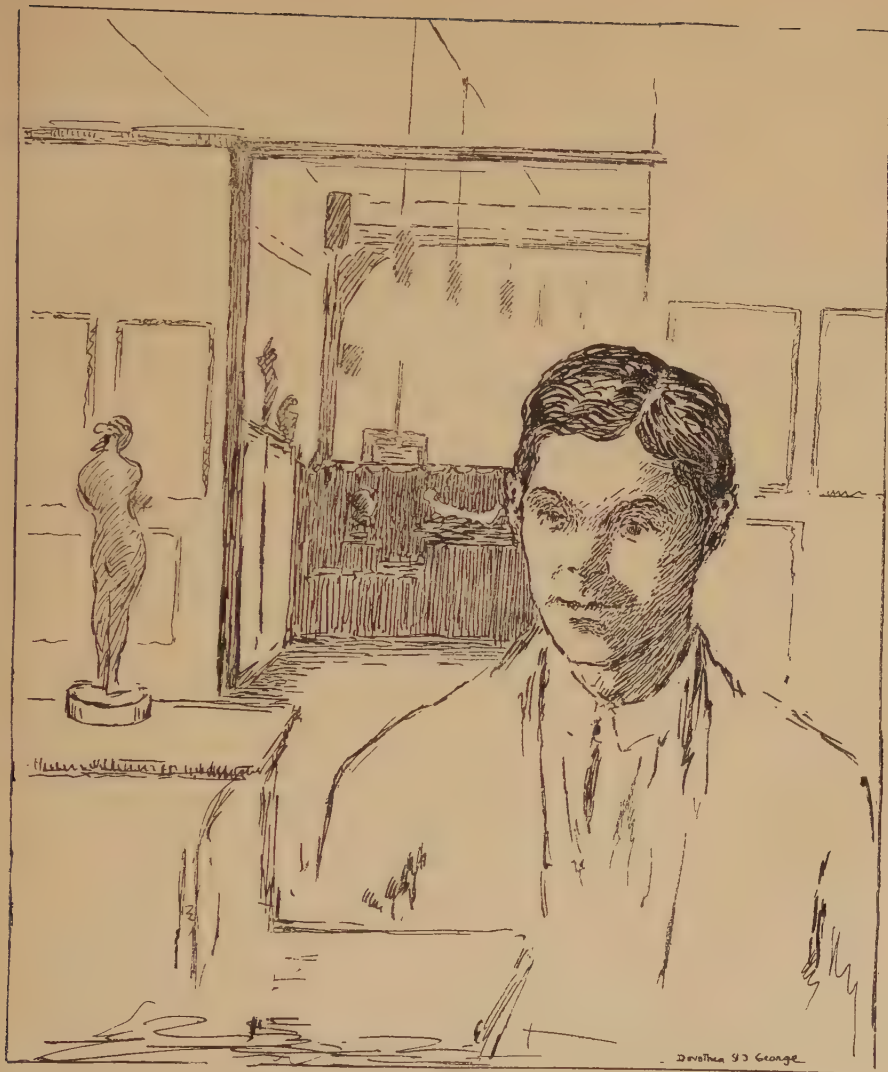
## CHAPTER IX

“ Your gallery  
Have we pass'd through, not without much content  
In many singularities.”

*The Winter's Tale.*

**I**T must often happen to Mr. Oliver Brown of the Leicester Galleries to despatch to a client some painting or piece of sculpture which he would very much rather take home with him for his choice private collection. He sells works of art; he also collects them. Many people imagine that because a man is engaged professionally in selling things of beauty he must be personally indifferent to them. If this be so in the main then Oliver Brown is an exception to the rule. He loves the beautiful creatures amidst which so much of his life is spent. He is an ornithologist, not a gamekeeper.

I first met him in the Café Royal. A brawl had broken out. Two foreign visitors were fighting, the one with fists, the other, against all the laws of the *duello*, with an umbrella. A slender man of middle height, compact, well groomed, eager, dashed forward with the artist's quick, instinctive interest in life in all its varied phenomena, and by his prompt action secured the best view possible of the belligerents. This was



OLIVER BROWN

*"Your gallery  
Have we pass'd through, not without much content."*



Mr. Oliver Brown. I myself, less strenuous, mounted upon a marble-topped table, emulating all unconsciously the diarist Pepys, who made use of an upturned bucket, the better to view a battle between a butcher and a greengrocer. The combat unhappily was of short duration. The waiters, who might have done so much to embolden the champions, seemed bent, positively, upon discouraging them, proving themselves thereby to be no sportsmen and disgusting everybody.

Oliver Brown is singularly modest in expressing personal views on art.

"Ask So-and-so or So-and-so," he will say; "they are professional critics."

But his views are extremely individual, and the dicta of one who has lived amongst works of art from his childhood upwards will never fail of commanding a respectful audience.

One of his earliest recollections is of James McNeill Whistler. As a tiny boy, he stared and stared at the Master's hat, much as Mr. L. A. Strong did at that of J. M. Synge.

Now wasn't it a curious thing  
To catch a sight of J. M. Synge,  
And notice nothing but his hat?  
But life is often queer like that.

The great artist was in mourning after the showy fashion of the Continent which reticent Anglo-Saxons abhor. But one bare inch of shiny surface was perceptible above the monstrous mourning band. His frock-coat, fitting closely to the figure, was buttoned up tight. The child sat on the



floor at Whistler's feet, but ever and anon he would creep out stealthily from the drawing-room into the hall to view THE HAT upon its peg, from which eminence it appeared to court the eyes of men with no whit less resolution than its master. Oliver's memory retains a general impression of Jimmy's talk with his father. The great etcher, like the soldier in Ovid, was fighting his old battles over again. One man had insulted him. He had sent his seconds with a challenge, but no answer had been received. The fellow had sunk into mere insignificance in consequence. Nobody would know him. Socially he was ostracized. Somebody else had reflected scurrilously upon Whistler through the columns of *The Hawk*. This antagonist he had struck with his cane in public. Whistler's relations with his fellow-men were such as called, not infrequently, for drastic action.

What a little wasp Whistler must have been, to be sure ! That famous repartee of his—

“ I wish I had said that, Jimmy,”

“ You will, Oscar, you will,”

seems to me always to place his friend Wilde in a finer light. It is not the time to run a man through the body when he is generously complimenting you and making his bow.

Oliver Brown has very definite views as to the limitations from which the average Englishman must first emancipate himself if he is to derive any rational delight from art. “ The art which is typically indigenous to England is graphic art, art, that is to say, which is topographical or reminiscent or descriptive. A landscape will sell not on its merits or

quality, but because it happens to remind some Alderman of the sweet locality where he spent his honeymoon. Yes, graphic art is the native growth, despite such landscapists of genius as Constable, Crome, Gainsborough and the others. The point is not that we have not succeeded admirably with graphic art, but that its triumphs are not in the realm of pure art at all, they are subsidiary to literature. Hogarth, Rowlandson, together with Cruikshank, Keene, 'Phiz,' Caldecott, and incidentally the Pre-Raphaelite illustrators, are the artists whose work alone is appreciated instinctively by the average man, and what these artists are doing is to give us book illustration either *per se*, or in terms of paint.

"Englishmen excel in letters. The artist in this medium has sometimes succeeded in making his appeal to the great masses of his countrymen without compromising with his ideals. What house of any English painter is so famous as Wordsworth's cottage in the Lake district or Shakespeare's house at Stratford-on-Avon? There are many 'Shakespeare Heads' and 'Sir John Falstaff' inns. The 'Cheshire Cheese' is proud of its associations with Dr. Johnson, while the Dickens tradition is paramount throughout Kent. But no single English painter has succeeded as yet in impressing the popular imagination, and the populace judges of the painter's work always and ever from the literary view-point, never upon its own merits. Early training, often quite unconscious training, succeeds in blinding the average Englishman to any conception of abstract art—and practically all contemporary art is abstract. This habit of misjudging

art begins to be formed in the very nursery. A child owes his first impressions of art to the illustrations in his play books of nursery rhymes. Later on *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News* with their graphic literary art confirm his earlier misconceptions, and it takes a strong mind, a determined character, and plenty of good will into the bargain, to eradicate impressions which became deep rooted at the most vividly impressionable period of his life. When, as a man, he is called upon to give judgment upon abstract art, how in the world is he to be quit of the results of his early training? In other respects his judgment may be sound enough, but in painting——! He is still at it, seeking for an historical appeal, or a religious appeal, looking for an 'illustration,' or for 'drama.' He will seek anything from paint but the art of painting. Save the illustrative, there is really no English tradition in painting at all, and this tradition is not merely without value, but actively dangerous. It tends to make rational appreciation of art an impossibility.

"In sculpture also we lack all tradition. The average Victorian statue was a mere life cast. There was no interpretation, no imagination, no individualization, no spark anywhere of creative genius. The Victorian statue was a Madame Tussaud wax-work, contrived—to the world's lasting regret—in a far less perishable medium. When the sheer banality of these masterpieces was such as to make them actively dangerous to the nervous systems of sensitive, impressionable people, an attempt was made to 'idealize'



Jacob Epstein

*Many of whose most notable pieces have been exhibited  
at the 'Leicester Galleries'*





them. This was a process of sentimentalizing—it was as though the statues were destined for film work. It smoothed away from them even such character as unredeemed ugliness, when untempered by imagination, is sometimes capable of possessing. They were no longer even grotesque.

“True sculpture has just nothing in common with these perverse monstrosities. The sculptor is a creative artist who thinks in terms of plastic representation, and the nature of whose conceptions will be limited only by the resources of his material. He is concerned with the realization of sculptural form in bronze or stone. It is therefore of no earthly use, when confronted with such work, to attempt to gauge it by the test of everyday experience. That is sheer lack of education. One must dispense also with all preconceived notions, and look at every new object of beauty as far as may be with new eyes.”

Oliver Brown believes that one step towards national appreciation of sculpture would have been taken could people be induced to acquire the habit of purchasing it. A man will give a considerable sum for some beautiful vase, who would never dream of purchasing a statuette. We are besotted by our love for ornaments, ornaments *as such* of course, and quite independent of their being ornamental—ornaments for the mantelpiece, ornaments for the writing-desk, ornaments for sideboards and bookshelves, garden fountains, motor mascots. It is rarer than one would imagine to discover anybody who *collects* sculpture. People don't take it seriously, or rather they simply don't think

about it at all. They do—to a very limited extent—collect pictures, but as regards sculpture the total absence of all understanding, or interest in the matter, springs from sheer lack of education.

Some collectors specialize in “primitives.” They will pay vast sums for thirteenth and fourteenth-century paintings. Now familiarity with primitives leads frequently enough to appreciation of the moderns. But no one seems to collect primitive sculpture which might, who knows, lead its collector to an understanding of the sculpture of his own day. Thousands are interested in Memling or Van Eyck, for one who can derive pleasure from the sculpture of Chartres.

To climb great hills requires slow pace at first.

Few remember this truism when considering sculpture or painting. One gets the type of ass who exclaims with much moral indignation, “Now am I expected to admire *that!*” Nobody expects him to. One realizes that with that attitude he is incapable of understanding, and will remain incapable, unless he changes it, till the last hour of his life.

“I’m afraid I cannot see with your eyes,” observed a trite old lady of this type, intending a reproof.

“That is so, madame,” replied Claus, the Belgian painter, whom she had addressed, “God did not give you the artist’s eyes which see visions, but only those which He gives to ordinary people to prevent them from being knocked down by taxis.”



DORTHEA and GEORGE

*"To climb great hills requires slow pace at first." Few remember this truism when considering sculpture or painting. A man who would approach the study of golf, or bridge, or billiards, with decent humility, will swagger outrageously before a work of art, with its subtle double appeal to the brain and to the emotions.*



It seems obvious enough that besides an innate inclination towards an art, some study is likewise desirable, if one is to arrive at a just appreciation of it. Yet a man who would approach the study of golf, or bridge, or billiards, with decent humility, will swagger outrageously before a work of art, with its subtle double appeal to the brain and to the emotions. "I am afraid you will never educate *me* up to *that*!" This is a favourite tag. Rightly interpreted it means—"I am *common sense*. You are a *crank*, if not an impostor. You don't take *me* in, my fine fellow." This pretended self-depreciation is actually a crass form of self-flattery. And this common-sense customer who is not to be taken in thereupon takes himself off to some exhibition of "commercial art" which he thinks he *does* understand, and there he is "taken in" from his own materialistic standpoint, for the work he now purchases diminishes steadily in money value as day follows day.

To appreciate a work of art, forgive me for repeating this, but it cannot be said too often, one should bring a mind divested, so far as may be, of all previous conceptions. A certain lady—this is quite historical—burst into tears on a first view of Millet's "Angelus." In her teens she had been "converted" by a cheap reprint, and now found the original less pleasing than the "process reproduction." She came determined in her own mind to experience certain emotions, and here was the damned thing trying to make her feel something else!

What will be the sensations of the young fellow who



comes to the Mona Lisa fresh from the perusal of Walter Pater's immortal prose poem? He must either be disillusioned or hypnotize himself. The passage is sublime, of course, but what I feel about it, says Oliver Brown almost viciously, "is that Pater woke up in great fettle that morning, and that he could have sung like that about a lamp-post. The Mona Lisa just happened to start him off. I must say," concludes my friend, now merely fretful, "that passage was—a little uncalled for.

"No; come to an exhibition of paintings without previous conceptions and, having come, consent to look at them. Very few people do, you know. A Frenchman commonly stands a while and *studies*. An Englishman just glances and passes on.

"To be modern is—what is it? It has certainly nothing to do with age. There is a very erudite old gentleman, well into the 'sixties, who comes to the Leicester Galleries whenever I have an exhibition of modern art. He is enthusiastic. He buys in quantity. But last time he came he was accompanied by his son. The son appeared shocked at the father's enthusiasm. He sought to exercise a restraining influence upon his erring parent, and attempted to lead him back to the Victorians, and away from these revolutionary modern masters.

"Some people make a great pother about 'English Art' so often as one has an exhibition of the work of any foreign painter. Give them a show of English art, and they purchase nothing. Then there is the hide-bound Tory, a character

not confined, as you might imagine, to the artificial comedy of the last century. We had just such a character at the Leicester Galleries a week or so back. We had two exhibitions at the same time, as we very frequently do. Our gentleman came into the room set aside for the advanced schools. 'It's monstrous, sir, it's imposture, sir. Such work ought to be burnt!' So he was diplomatically led away to the other room, where it was hoped that the Victorian masters might calm his nerves. It seems they were successful. He sat down upon *my* chair and immediately fell asleep.

"Give an exhibition of the work of some new artist at Paris and that exhibition will be the talk of Paris. It is not so in London. A fortune must be spent upon 'publicity,' upon advertisement, that is to say, and foolish, irrelevant propaganda. Why? We have precious little talk in London at all, and that is about the truth of the matter. There is prattle about the craze of the moment, or about stock-broking, or about sport, all this is allowable. To talk about art, however, is supposed to be 'highbrow,' that word borrowed from Yankee journalese, and by which the mob designate alike the obscure pedant and the man of creative genius. It's all one to them; he is supposed to think, and to think is freakish. To be 'highbrow' is certainly to be in the '*worst possible form*.' Yet one must discuss a thing if one wishes to form opinions or come to any conclusion about it. Without talk there can be no public opinion. Yet to talk art when you might be talking sport-shop is decidedly '*mal vu*,' if not positively indecent. But why?"

"Why indeed," I mused, "it is not before the brain that one should sport the fig-leaf."

"There really is no use," says Albert Rutherstone, "in attempting to lay down any general principles about art. Suppose, for example, I were to say, 'I never go to the National Gallery' on the strength of my not happening to have gone there now for a considerable time. Suppose I were to deliver myself of this statement dogmatically and put it thus: 'One should not go to the National Gallery,'—I take the first example that happens to come to mind. Well, what would result? An hour or so after making the statement, I should inevitably go there, and as certainly come upon some masterpiece which I had forgotten and which would give me intense delight for six months after. A man who lays down dogmatic principles in art is a man who believes that he has come to final conclusions about the matter. But it is the demand of the intellect to feel itself alive. So long as a man lives and retains his mental alertness, his outlook must be susceptible of almost hourly modifications. No, I am afraid, my dear fellow, that I must refrain from giving you any views about art. I suppose you think," with a Mona Lisa smile, "'this is a charming fellow, what use can I make of him?'"

You see, that is the type of man Albert Rutherstone is. If I were to send him this page to obtain his sanction for print, I feel positive he would not sanction it, so I shall frankly play the ruffian and not send it. No sprinkling

of chaff draws this very shy bird. Like Swinburne's "Time" he "stoops to no man's lure." It is difficult even to induce him to speak about stage settings and theatre craft.

And yet how inimitable were those scenic devices which he contrived in the old days for Granville Barker! How intellectually stimulating they were and—important point—how practical! It seems to me that I have never seen Shakespeare played since those days, for, apart from their own imaginative beauty, they admitted of the whole piece being played out without cuts. Now there are various objections to cuts which, incidentally, are absolutely unnecessary. One is that as Shakespeare at his best is the most dramatic of dramatists—plunging one immediately *in medias res* and ringing down his curtain when the action has come to a close. By cutting it becomes frequently quite impossible to follow the action, unless of course one knows the play by heart, which it is by no means everybody who does.

A second objection to cuts is the abominable hash they make of the word music. The modern system of wholly unsystematic and irresponsible "cutting" is only possible with a public which has lost that sensitiveness of ear which the Elizabethans apparently possessed. I have just seen a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which the reply of Hippolyta to Theseus, "I was with Hercules and Cadmus once" was cut, together with Theseus' reply to his Queen, so far as to the words, "Each under each." The effect of the whole passage being cumulative, one can imagine how effectively the botchers responsible performed



their office. In place of an appeal which stirs the heart like a trumpet call—just nothing. Oh, these pedlars in divine mysteries, why do they inoculate the master-singer with the germs of their own laryngitis! No such outrages were possible while Albert Rutherford was designing and Granville Barker acting and producing. . . .

I remember an evening when Albert gave a party in his studio, just such a party as one would imagine that so decorative an artist would give. One item of the programme was a series of sword dances by a diminutive Japanese who might have stepped straight out from some Oriental teapot or screen. The picturesque costume of his country, of course. With curved drawn sword which glimmered like flame in the firelight, his movements portrayed the exultation of spring—love, hate, hope, despair and the devil knows what. He slid, he glided, he swayed and wheeled, turning his body in such a way as to suggest that there were no bones in it, but some subtle contrivance of steel springs. At late last I remember he turned his back upon the company and kneeling down, fairly committed hara-kiri—oh, but quite bloodlessly and discreetly!—prior to collapsing, with imposing dignity, upon the hearthrug.

Ion Strang I met ages ago, but I have not seen him for years. The War drove such a furrow across one's life, and afterwards I was abroad a good bit, and one thing and another. . . .

Odd that I should remember a word of that conversation, and yet I do.



A music hall artiste had been reviving the old trick of putting her head in the lion's mouth. Actually, she laid her face against it.

"My objection," said I, "to that sort of show is that, however much you may dope the lion, you can never be positive that he will not come to and maul the lady."

"It is precisely for that reason I go," said Strang, "and everybody else. You go on the chance that you may witness a most appalling accident. The woman draws her cheque simply as being willing to take the risk of some day being a victim. It's the same with a trick cyclist. Nobody would pay to see him ride along a plank upon the stage, but raise the plank sixty feet in the air and people will flock to see him because there is just the one chance in a thousand that he may lose his nerve and dash himself to pieces. One pays for the thrill. So with our lady and the lion. If it were not for the chance of an accident no one would go. The hall would be empty if she were to perform the same trick with a sheep."

I wonder what the reader will think of this philosophy, which, by the way, I must remind him was thrown off without deliberation in quite casual talk, and which strictly, I suppose, I have no right to record.

Personally I take off my hat to the man who thinks clearly and looks the facts of life honestly in the face. To learn "what exactly takes place in the world" was stated by Schopenhauer to be the "object of education." Intellectual honesty is an extremely rare quality, although a most

essential one for an artist. The Flemish painters—the great classics, I mean—had all this quality. Examine a stag-hunt by De Vos. Look at the panic depicted in the eye of the stag. Look at the hound who is fastening his teeth in the creature's leg. Look at that other hound who is being tossed, the spasmodic contraction of the muscles and the wounds and the blood. Horrible if you will, but honest, and I sometimes think that honesty in art is both column and keystone.

Now look at an analogous scene as it is commonly portrayed by the modern "commercial artist." Here come the jolly huntsmen with their jolly flushed faces! There are the jolly horses and the jolly hounds, all having the time of their lives! And there, well away in front of them all, is the jolly fox. You don't see him so well, but who can doubt that he revels in his little outing?

Sometimes our artist presents the scene a little differently. The chase is over. The brush is being presented by some bounding sentimentalist to a charming little girl. The rest of the fox—the part of him which is not the brush—has disappeared, nobody quite knows where. He was quite enjoying himself when *last* we saw him. Idyllic, isn't it? But also—a trifle discreditable, dishonest, unmanly?

There was much to be said for our Georgian ancestors. They did a great deal of which we should have been ashamed, but then *they* were *not* ashamed. They hanged their criminals—but they did it "*publicly*." We moderns would be

struck dumb with disgust were we to come upon a man in the death agony upon a gibbet by the Marble Arch. So we have hewn down Tyburn Tree and have abolished that wicked old system which disgraced our history so long. Or at least, no, not precisely *that*, only we do it more—discreetly. What humbugs we are! What precious humbugs and moral cowards! It is this temper of mind which produces the idyllic hunting-scene for the benefit of those who have never seen a fox. The sun is shining brightly and the robins are singing and the pink coats are as pink as the colourist can make them and the fox himself, as his whole past life comes before him, cannot recall having spent a more enjoyable afternoon.

Thank you. I prefer De Vos.

If you are by way of haunting studios overseas, you will find two English sculptors to be universally known, Jacob Epstein and Frank Dobson. In those foreign portfolios of "Contemporary Arists" it is rare indeed not to come upon some reproduction of Frank Dobson's work. He has acquired fame in the States, in Italy, in Belgium, but he has likewise, which I take to be more remarkable still, firmly established his reputation in Paris. They have set him aside certain bays for the approaching "Salon d'Automne." Yet Frenchmen are not forward to discover merit in artists of nationalities other than their own.

I once spent three weeks in Paris as the guest of a Parisian civil servant of the higher grade. He was as delightful

a fellow as one could wish to see, but he had never so much as heard the name of Michelangelo. He even went so far as to assure me that I was a "deteriorationalist," when I suggested that the work of the great Florentine might, if judged by its own particular standards, approach in merit that of the average member of the then contemporary French School.

Frank Dobson's views upon his own art should prove of interest, since he has earned the right to talk by first making himself a master of his subject. But since that qualification may seem to the critic Jones, to be but a mere impertinence, I mention it only in parenthesis.

Dobson has the knack of talking, whereas many artists, if their field lie outside letters, strike the ordinary man as singularly inarticulate. This is natural enough, of course. If the painter could express himself equally well in words, there would be no need for him to use paint. So also with the sculptor and with the musician. The nearer any art approaches perfection, the less can it be translated into any other medium whatever without becoming something totally different and generally inferior to what it was. One could not metamorphose the Venus of Milo into the heroic couplet, or Turner into sculpture, or Blake into prose. I put forward these painful truisms because—although we all recognize them to be truisms—we experience none the less a high degree of irritation when an artist exclaims: "Well, there *is* my work. That's what I want to say." The exasperation of the befogged spectator





Frank Dobson



*In studios overseas you will find two English sculptors to be universally known, Jacob Epstein and Frank Dobson.*





is understandable. The artist—painter, sculptor, or what not—has spent a lifetime in developing his eye. The spectator has just rushed in from the City. It is for the artist to be compassionate. Otherwise he will resemble a Swiss Guide who should remark: “There *is* the Matterhorn. Look at it. What do you want with me?”

“A little encouragement, my friend,” replies the Tourist courteously, “I come from the Lincolnshire flats.”

Let me try then to digest into some semblance of order the ideas thrown off by Frank Dobson in the course of a casual conversation over a bottle.

I gather that this master regards contemporary “advanced” sculpture as something that really marks the turning of an epoch. “Most sculpture for the past five hundred years has been preoccupied with subjects which are no part of the true business of a sculptor at all. The modern world will not accept Hellenic sculpture with the facile satisfaction of the men of a few generations back. Greek art was mainly concerned with the reproduction in marble of the perfection of human physical development. To be beautiful was to emulate the Hellenic gods who were “red and white, fleet and fair.” When this purpose of the portrayal of the idealized nude is achieved, it happens not seldom that the purely æsthetic element suffers—the arrangement, the design, the grouping of masses.”

“The Parthenon frieze,” I ventured, “there surely you have purity of design?”

“But a frieze,” Dobson answered, “is not pure sculpture.

The effect is largely pictorial. Sculpture alone can express sculpture. A sculptor's job is in three dimensions."

"What of mediæval sculpture?"

"Mediæval sculpture was concerned primarily with religion and only secondarily with form. Renaissance sculpture emancipates from the old shackles only to forge new. The defect of Michelangelo and his fellows is their bias towards the dramatic; his "Slaves," his "David," his "Lorenzo." Donatello, altogether a lesser spirit, comes nearer the moderns in his feeling for form. It is with him, of all the Florentines, that the moderns are most in sympathy.

"Negro art, oddly enough, *is* sculptural—more so than would have been the case with a more intelligent or perhaps"—laughing—"a less intelligent race. The sculptured totem borrows from no other art. It is not pictorial. It is just itself. It is certainly sculpture. It has form reduced, as form in sculpture should be, to the very simplest elements. Its nature is limited only by the limitations of the material."

"Is there no danger of art becoming too abstract; of its becoming lost in mathematics—of the artist's making his appeal to the intelligence direct and not through the medium of the emotions at all?"

"There *was* such a danger certainly. With the advent of the Cubists, some work—not much—was produced which had very little emotional quality. But that movement was revolutionary in its determination to make the assertion of its views emphatic. The purely intellectual

appeal was sometimes overstressed. It is so no longer. The world has accepted the new style. There is no longer the resistance which provokes to excesses.

“A portrait-sculptor should set to work determined to produce *sculpture*. The psychological element should not be lost sight of, but it should be subordinated to the æsthetic. One must interpret. If you want a mere record, what's wrong with a Kodak? You go to an artist for a work of art.

“A monument should contain elements of design which produce in the onlooker a sense of *permanence*. It should be static. Of its own age, it should have an appeal for all ages. It will have, inevitably, a purely personal element as *well*—the result of the sculptor's own personality which will make itself felt, perhaps even in his own despite. The statue of King Charles in Trafalgar Square I consider a good monument. It has the *feeling* for sculpture, yet with an elegance which is of its own time.

“Restless sculpture is an abomination.

“If all sculptors were to attack their material direct, restless sculpture—tortured muscles, febrile actions—would cease to be depicted. The limitations are salutary which are produced by the nature of the material in which you work. Work directly and you learn what stone will, and will not, do. It is possible to do anything with clay and then transfer it to stone. What are you doing in effect? Producing in one material, work conceived and wrought out in another. Hence lamentable confusion and a bastard

art. By *direct* work you will have *static* work as your result. When confronted with a block of stone, you don't fall into a frenzy, or feel like lashing it about. Your approach will be respectful."

"Have you any criterion for judging sculpture which you think might prove helpful to a man, intelligent we will say, and with every desire to apprise the matter rationally but without specialized knowledge?"

"I should say something of this sort," answers Dobson reflectively: "it is possible to reproduce human form by a process of casting. A complete replica of man or woman, nude or clothed, is perfectly possible. You have the photograph also, and you have 'photo-sculpture.' But it isn't satisfactory. The artist knows, has always known, that mere reproduction is not his job. What then *is* his job? He must interpret what he feels with all necessary regard to the limits imposed upon him by the medium in which what he feels is to be expressed. In sculpture he will give you what he feels, but his medium requiring form—*shapes*—he will endeavour to arrange these so as to evoke a sensation of beauty. He will organize his masses in such a way as to produce rhythm, poise, volume. If what results is a thing which delights upon its own grounds and without any reference to anything else, whether to the religious instinct or the dramatic or any other, then a creative work of art will have been produced."

Edmund Dulac is a talker, at times a great talker, but



he has moods. I have heard him talk admirably well, but I have not been successful when I have tried to draw him out to speak about his particular field of work. He was born at Toulouse and as a mere child had the strongest inclination towards pictorial art. His father at first wished the boy to study for the law, but an unexpected event confirmed the little Edmund in his first ambition. A friend of his father's, a merchant with connections in the East, arrived one day at his house with a magnificent collection of Japanese prints. At that day, in the provinces at least, very few men of any class had any acquaintance whatever with Oriental art. The delight with which these triumphs of colour and design inspired the boy was so abundant as to convince his father that his son's future career had been predetermined by Nature herself. So he sent him to an art school, and being himself an art lover—but after the fashion of that day and locality—he was most desirous that the boy should distinguish himself in the academic curriculum which the school provided. The young Dulac was thus compelled to smother much of his innate love for glowing colour, much of his rapidly developing talent for singular originality of composition. By ham-stringing himself he won the race and bore away from his fellows divers much-coveted prizes.

When he left the school he immediately returned to his earlier methods. Who was it said of our English public schools, “the great men they produce are those they fail to kill”? It would seem that the same aphorism holds good with the educational establishments of France. Again Dulac

returned to exploit that rich field of his inner artistic consciousness. I wonder what school the poet-painter, Blake, attended in his childhood's days? Some educational institution *must* have "produced" him; what else could have inspired him with that significant reflection—"The Eagle never lost so much time as when he consented to go to school to the Crow"?

It is always interesting to discover how a singular personality reacts upon others.

"How does Dulac impress you?" I once demanded of a lady who has known the painter for a considerable time. The subject of discussion was himself present in the studio when I put this most disconcerting question to his unfortunate guest.

"I think," this lady answered, "it is his profoundly metaphysical mind which interests me most. There are times when I almost fancy that the unreal world is the only real world to him. That this unseen world is his fixed reality and the everyday world of visible beings and workaday affairs is the one which gives him his surprises; the world through which he picks his way with caution."

I was impelled upon these researches by sheer unpardonable human curiosity. Dulac, who is the best-humoured man in the world, did not protest. Perhaps, thought I, he regards me as either too material or too metaphysical a foeman to be worthy of his steel. And so with the assumed casualness of one who has dropped in from the astral plane, I ventured to interrogate a second lady, almost immediately

after the first one. He took no steps to demolish me, so I mentally registered another of the Master's qualities, "The character of Edmund Dulac," I murmured, "is signalized by polite forbearance." "What do you think of our Dulac here?" I bluntly asked her. "How does he impress you?"

"I think," said she, glancing nervously from myself to him, and truly her situation was not an enviable one, "it is his *scope*. He plays the piano admirably and very many other instruments. He models, you know—that caricature in wax of George Moore is his. He writes poetry—well, I think, and uncommonly good prose. He is first-rate as a designer of costume. You remember the wonderful costumes he used to wear at the Arts dances at the Albert Hall? They were the most original that one saw there. Every one took notice of them and praised them. Then, one must not think of him only as a book illustrator, he is a painter in all branches of the art, his portraits are excellent. And he is so neat with his fingers, too, it is a pleasure to see him make even a tiny box."

I remember one evening when Dulac was in great talking form, though he tells me he has forgotten telling the story to which I refer. There was a party at Oliver Brown's. As I entered, the first person I noticed was Edmund Dulac, addressing a semicircle of captivated mortals who were hanging on his words. He pronounces our English "th" to perfection, but his vowel sounds can at times be quaintly exotic.

"—And so," Dulac was saying, "the foxes gathered

themselves together into an orchestra, and produced the most melodious sounds by tapping on their tommies ! ”

“ Don’t you remember, Dulac, telling us about the foxes ? ”

“ No, I don’t.”

“ But you *must*, and you told us afterwards, you know, the tale of the two children in Normandy who clung to the ceiling with the palms of their hands, against the force of gravity. Their mother described this queer trick as ‘ fits,’ but the doctors could do nothing. It was not until the priest had been called in and had formally exorcized the spirits, that the children again became normal—— ”

“ Oh yes,” cries Dulac, brightening with sudden recollection, “ that was quite true, you know, about those children. They clung on by the palms of their hands—— ”

“ At first go off,” says John Hassall, the poster artist, “ a poster should rivet your attention ; the colour effect will suffice to do this. Having thus obtained its audience, the poster must now make known its subject ; this may be a beautiful design or a humorous one. It is at this second glimpse that the design will catch the eye. The humorous poster gets more talked about than that which aims primarily at achieving an effect of design. That is because more people have a sense of humour than a sense of design. Railway posters may be extremely artistic. They deal generally with ‘ views ’—landscape effects, observable from this point or that, if you travel by such and such a train service. You can’t very well be funny about a landscape, though perhaps







*Edmund Dulac*

"There are times when I almost fancy that the unreal world is the only real world to him. That this unseen world is his fixed reality and the everyday world of visible beings and workaday affairs is the one which gives him his surprises: the world through which he picks his way with caution."

I may claim an exception to the rule in my 'Skegness is So Bracing.'"

Mr. Hassall's most artistic poster is perhaps "The Beggars are coming to Town." His most universally popular poster was certainly that of the little slavey, panic-stricken at the appearance of the dragon vacuum cleaner. Should you discover anybody unacquainted with that poster try him with the veracious history of the "Curate's Egg." He will *roar* with laughter. He will not have heard it before.

The painter as pictured in *Punch* and upon the films is identical—velvet coat; dreamy eye; knickerbockers. Were these ever a vogue amongst artistic folk? Not in our time, not I fancy at any time. If you were to see John Hassall without knowing who he was, you might very well size him up as a yachtsman, or naval man on leave who had taken the opportunity of getting into a comfortable suit of "civvies." Brown hair cut short, blue-eyed, clean-shaven, he endues a sweater and a pair of grey flannel "bags." Only at tea-time do you remark a trait which is characteristic of no ordinary mortal. This is it. He drinks camp coffee from a cup so large that it would make a very tolerable saucepan.

Old Noah he had an ostrich farm and fowls on the largest scale,  
He ate his egg with a ladle in an egg-cup big as a pail,  
And the soup he took was elephant soup and the fish he took was Whale,

and if he wanted coffee after lunch he would look in on Hassall and beg the loan of his Rabelaisian coffee-cup.

Hassall is usually uncommonly busy, particularly in that early part of the afternoon when daylight begins to fail—and of late years the sun would appear to be afflicted with recurrent syncope—while the English winter, as we know from Byron, has its

Ending in July, to recommence in August.

Hassall regards the extraordinary variety of commissions which pour in upon him as a very good joke indeed.

“I was hard at it yesterday on a poster that had to do with gas mantles, when a fellow rang me up—would I design something for his sweets? ‘Come along round and discuss it.’ He came along and found me in the thick of a series advertising tinned salmon!”

“Had he got any idea as to what he wanted you to do for his sweets?”

“He had a fancy for the Pied Piper luring a horde of children with a tin of sweets. I pointed out, of course, that the children who followed the Pied Piper *died*, with the solitary exception of the cripple boy who couldn’t make good enough going to catch up with the wily adventurer. I expressed a pious hope that the public would not interpret the allegory too literally.”

John Hassall has clear-cut views about the poster as well from the technical as from many other points of view. It will surprise some people, for instance, to learn that he is a member of a society whose avowed intention is to abolish advertisements as eyesores, from the open country, and

from sites of peculiar interest and beauty. He was completely disgusted when, upon his first visit to Boulogne, his view of the cathedral from the train was screened effectively by a huge hoarding boosting somebody or other's soap.

Neither does he believe in the Gargantuan posters which are beginning little by little to find their way over here from the States.

"The figures in a poster should not be above life-size. If they are, they will be out of harmony with their surroundings, an important point, but one which is very commonly overlooked.

"An excess of lettering is a great mistake. A simple title and the picture itself should be sufficient. One doesn't want talk.

"A poster should have as few colours as possible, but I say this only from the painter's point of view. Plain flat colours and a thick outline. There should be no shading except upon the faces, precisely as in stained glass. And there by the way," cries Hassall, warming to his subject, "there you get the pictorial advertisement in its most distinguished form—the true poster of the Middle Ages. Martyrs' symbols and so forth. They all advertise aids to soul-development. The road to the New Jerusalem was lined by immense hoardings which simply blazed advertisements. To-day our advertisers are more obsessed by corporal desiderata—soups and pills. Yet those glass windows of the old churches remain the most distinguished examples we are ever likely to see of the active advertisement. And

what cunning old fellows those were! If you wanted to *see* the advertisement—and they took care that everybody *did*—*you had to go into their churches to do so!*

“The art of the poster proper was not possible until the invention of the craft of printing. Before printing there was no system which admitted of the tradesman's placard being multiplied. But men had the idea, as is always the case, before the phenomenon. The old tavern signs were just posters in essence, every sign had its imaginative appeal—‘Dinner at the Swan’ intimates the first, ‘at the Royal Oak’ insinuates another; ‘at the Rising Sun’ whispers a third.

“The Elizabethans had some sort of poster work in their play bills. Have you read *A Warning to Fair Women* of 1599? Tragedy whips Comedy from the stage, crying:

’Tis you have kept this theatre so long  
Painted in playbills upon every post,  
While I am scornèd of the multitude.

The ‘painting’ in these bills was probably a coarse-coloured woodcut, depicting the most striking ‘situation’ in the play.”

The talk wandering to modern “period” advertisements, I expressed some scorn of their crazy chronology. “You see men in sixteenth-century costume drinking punch and port which were not in vogue till a couple of centuries later. Eighteenth-century men in wigs are presented smoking cigarettes like Victorians.”

I found Hassall in complete agreement with me. “But



it just boils down to this," he concluded, "whatever may be your field of work it is always better to be educated than not. Of course I am talking now about posters for the English market. The Americans have a totally different set of values. It doesn't annoy them in the slightest degree to observe Oliver Cromwell listening rapturously to a fox-trot upon Somebody-or-other's Gramophone."

"Of course," said I, "where the effect is intentionally comic, I waive my objection. It is the realistic historical poster which is all wrong that exasperates me. I have not the faintest objection to Nero smoking a cigar—particularly when the artist with a happy symbolism has left the band on."

"Do you remember the reference to advertising in the Bible?"

"Really? I had no idea!"

"Yes," says Hassall, "the Jews were always a commercial people. It's in the fourth book of Moses somewhere: 'I will *advertise* thee,' says the vindictive Balaam to the quaking Balak, 'what this people shall do to thy people in the latter ages.'"

"Posters, of course, and we may safely assume that the rancorous prophet gave the commission to the most callous caricaturist of the whole Semitic race.

"And you know Dr. Johnson's comment upon advertising push—this is *not* a leg-pull."

"I don't," said I, "yet I thought I knew my Boswell."

"I'm not joking; here's the passage, quoted you see in

this book on the *Art of the Poster*, by my friend Shaw Sparrow—‘The man who first took advantage of the general curiosity that was excited by a siege or a battle to betray the readers of news into the knowledge of the shop where the best puffs and powders were to be sold, was undoubtedly a man of great sagacity and profound skill in the nature of man.’ ”

“Glorious ! ” said I.

Although this work is but one department of his activities, Mr. Graham Petrie’s name begins to be associated in the public mind with an increasing number of railway posters which delight the discriminating by their unequivocal beauties of colour and design. Hear him expose, briefly and lucidly, some of the principles which, in his judgment, should govern the practice of this fascinating craft.

“A poster should never depend for its effect on subtle tones—since these can rarely be reproduced with sufficient fidelity—but should be based on a simple, emphatic, decorative pattern.

“The landscape poster should present an epitome or synopsis of the place it advertises, photographic accuracy being subordinated to this end.

“The Whistlerian dictum : ‘The unessential is detrimental to the essential,’ is particularly applicable to the poster.

“The mission of the railway poster is to guide the footsteps of those who seek an Elysium, and its voice

should be as the voice of the muezzin, arresting attention and proclaiming to the multitude, in clarion tones, the propinquity of Paradise."

And how well do such posters achieve their ends ! When we gaze upon those sunny heights, those laughing lakes, those cerulean bays and coves, do we *ever* realize that in the locality depicted it is pouring with rain, while the sun is out and the birds are singing in Battersea Park ? Yet this is almost always the case, you know. A very specious art is theirs, bland, plausible, insinuating.

There was a very serious young fellow once—ingenuous, grave, full of the loftiest ambitions—who was lured the whole way from Waterloo Station into the remotest wilds of Cornwall by a poster which depicted a young thing without stockings sitting on a gate. She was, he earnestly assured us, "the concrete embodiment of his ideal of the feminine form." What happened precisely we never managed to extract from him, not the minutiae at all events ; he was singularly reserved. But there was some story of a lover or a husband. There were "explanations," I remember, explanations which were not deemed satisfactory. Money was extracted, much money, by way of indemnification. And it was all fearfully awkward, you know, for he was "going in for the church" and it "might have got about." He returned to Town all the worse for his holiday. Yes——

I sometimes ask myself—when in colloquy with poster artists—if they are *quite honest men*, and upon what principles they justify their alliance with commercial magnates ;

characters who without their assistance were already guileful enough.

Sancho Panza likewise had an island, but *that* no one envied him. The Court Physician, anxious to keep Sancho's head cool that he might with the nicest discrimination determine cases at law, reduced his table till he had no more to dine upon than a mouse. He never succeeded in raising money by selling his subjects, and, to conclude all, the revolutionaries created so outrageous a tumult that the poor fellow was glad to abdicate within the first week of his reign.

In comparison with Sancho's island that of Compton Mackenzie is a jewel indeed. Its weird name, "Jethou," some have attempted to derive from a Norse word signifying "magic." Whether this explanation be philologically sound is far from certain, but lovers of the picturesque will have no fault to find with it. Jethou is an island of enchantment. In its copse of gnarled, storm-twisted trees a satyr would not appear an anachronism, nor a mermaid out of place within any of those fantastic indentations of its rocky coast-line. And the flowers—one can hardly set foot to ground for fear of treading upon them! First the primroses in their hundreds of thousands. Just on these slopes, at this angle of the hill, their delicate instincts have taught them they will obtain sufficient shelter from the sun. Is there anything in the creation more subtly inexplicable than the instincts of flowers? The primroses remain within their confines



DOROTHEA ST JOHN GEORGE

## *Capt. Mackenzie*

*Mackenzie is to be reckoned with the "extravertive" rather than with the "introspective" writers. . . . The introspective writer stands revealed in all his characters, the "extravertive" is lost in them.*





and do not trouble their pretty heads with what lies beyond them. Then one enters upon the territory of the champions who, no less than the primroses, have sought out what is requisite for their flourishing. The bluebells, less fastidious than primroses or champions, thrust themselves everywhere, and there is the rust red of stonecrop, and the red gold of gorse and broom, and as background to it all the green and purple of the sea, flashing into sheets and cascades of crystal where it strikes the rocks. And there is the whisper of the ocean and its querulousness, all day and all night long. Here is the "still vex't Bermoothes."

That this island should be the possession of one so sensitive to beautiful things as Compton Mackenzie—poet, music-lover, artist of nervous yet exquisite prose—is a rare piece of poetic justice. Mackenzie is to be reckoned with the "extraversive" rather than the "introspective" writers. The difference? The introspective is concerned primarily with himself, his own soul, antipathies, moods and mental processes. It is himself or some aspect of himself which he creates in all his characters. The introspective writer stands revealed in all his characters, the "extraversive" is lost in them. Thus "General Burgoyne" of the *Devil's Disciple* and "Warwick" of *St. Joan* are both the same character—Mr. Bernard Shaw. One cannot so easily discern Shakespeare in Shylock or Dickens in Jonas Chuzzlewit, or in Barnaby Rudge.

Compton Mackenzie's versatility is truly astonishing. Who would suppose that works so unlike each other as *The*

*Heavenly Ladder*, *Santa Claus in Summer* and *The Old Man of the Sea* were the successive productions of one pen? And look at the number of characters which he has created. Surely if one were to take full toll of them they would not fall short of five hundred. What other novelist since Dickens has so rich a gallery of portraits? And how subtly their creation is developed in the reader's consciousness! They just glide into his acquaintance. They "happen in upon him" with no apparent effort on the part of their creator. Though we are vouchsafed but few glimpses of her, how vivid are our impressions of the hero's mother in *Sinister Street*! How convincingly *true* is the heroine of *Carnival*! Nor are they superficial, as has sometimes been stated. Consider that strange compound of boorishness and passion, of dogged courage and sturdy independence, the chauffeur in *Coral*. Can we not clearly trace in him the influence of his antecedents, the dancing girl, his mother, and the Cornish farmer who married her? Mackenzie makes full use of dialogue in his development of character. This saves us from the tediousness and artificiality of external description. Let the "Aunt" in *Coral* furnish an example in point.

"And ever since I've looked after you, Frank. Well, just before your Mother went out that morning I said to her, 'I'll look after young Frank when you're gone.' All I meant was I wouldn't let you eat the wool off of a toy lamb, and which you always would do if ever you got the chance. But afterwards the words came back to me, and it seemed like as if I'd made her a promise to look after you

altogether." The "off of" and the "like as," it is by many such slight strokes that the portrait is developed. From this short passage alone a reader of imagination would have formed insensibly some conception both of the character's psychology, probable personal appearance and surroundings. That this story, so simply and directly related in such good plain English, so masterful in its pathos which never degenerates into sentimentality, should have been given us from the columns of an illustrated weekly gives one high hopes for the future. Were work of such high quality more generally accepted by newspapers the gibes against feuilletons and feuilletonists—all too often justified—would become obsolete and meaningless.

Mackenzie is never more interesting than when you can induce him to talk about novel-writing, that art which of all others is the most widely appreciated at the present day. His views on technique will give the casual reader many sidelights.

"In the older novel it was the author's privilege to know all about his characters. His attitude was Olympian. But the nineteenth—that century of doubt and questioning—disputed this convention. How *could* an author know all about his personages? What man in real life can know *all* about his neighbours? Typical of the revolt was Flaubert with his *Madame Bovary*. This author presents everything through a hero towards whom his attitude is one of almost complete neutrality and detachment. But the objection to this method is that the hero or heroine through whom

such stories are delivered tends inevitably to possess wider sympathies, greater powers of discernment, to be more philosophic, to be *broad* every way than they would be in real life, or than their authors themselves intended them to be. Conrad recognized the defects of this system. To obviate them he presents a story not through one but several characters. His innovation has been, is, prodigiously admired. My personal predilections are against it. My main objection is that it is just as *conventional*. We have three characters, say A, B, and C. Two men and a woman. B has broken with C, a frightful state of affairs. He pours out his complaints to the sympathetic A, and incidentally keeps him up half the night. Such sympathy is far from common. But this is not all. There is the woman's side of the question. So C gets her wedge in and keeps A out of bed for the best part of the night following. At the end of it he doubtless seeks the welcome seclusion of a provincial nursing home, lest all the other characters of the novel call upon him in turn.

"But what's wrong with narrative description? I like it. It's the most difficult part of a novel to write and it's eminently worth doing. It is much simpler to say, 'The Countess ran up the stairs two steps at a time,' than to say:

" 'Where is the Countess?'

" 'Upstairs.'

" 'How did she go up those stairs?'

" 'Two at a time!'

"Dialogue should be employed to develop character, narrative to advance action."



The conversation had turned upon "pot-boiling."

"Pot-boiling is a word used invariably in a derogatory sense. It implies writing *down*, writing below one's capacity. This is never worth while, nor is it in the least easy. With every appeal which appears to derogate from a supposed pontifical dignity, a novelist runs the risk of being accused of pot-boiling. Why should it be refused him to attempt what every Elizabethan dramatist attempted, namely to appeal not only to the stalls, but to the whole house, including pit and gallery? Shakespeare did it. But the wretched novelist is supposed to write only for the stalls, even although by doing so he may cramp his style; restrain his versatility.

"Don't believe the saying that 'Every man has one novel in him.' It's mere cant. Very few men have. Very few indeed. I doubt even whether any novelist has above half a dozen novels in him which he feels an imperative need for writing, which he will write with passion. But a novelist is a professional teller of tales. He is not endowed by a grateful government, and so, unless he desire to starve, he simply cannot afford to lay by his pen indefinitely the moment he has satisfied his purely personal self. What I mean by a pot-boiler would be, I suppose, a story called for a few months earlier than I should otherwise have embarked upon the writing of it. I should have the theme in my head. I should have something in the way of notes. I should accept the commission. I should meet the demand half-way. That is pot-boiling, if one likes to call it so. But I should neglect no pains to render my work as perfect as might be, and if

the work were destined for a wide audience I should write the simplest story in the simplest way. Within these limits a novelist may work with the highest regard for his literary ideals. There should be no sneers at the teller of tales as such. No one gibes at a jockey because his mount is not always a Derby winner ! ”

I commented upon a change of style in his later books, and said I found it more condensed than formerly. He answered :

“ The change of style which you notice is due almost entirely to my War experience. I wrote with my own hand at least six thousand telegrams, some of so much as two thousand words each—narrative telegrams, from which I ruthlessly excised the faintest trace of superfluity. No adjectives ; hardly an adverb. My largest wire cost £130 at a shilling a word.”

“ What qualities do you regard as essential if a novel is to live ? ”

“ No novel has ever lived from which humour—the comedy spirit—was altogether excluded. Fielding, Smollett, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, all were humorists. It is one of the signs of vitality, and vitality I regard as the prime essential in every work of literary art. Despite the critics with whom it did not at first find favour, *Madame Bovary* proved an immediate success with the Parisian public. It lives by virtue of its vitality. Flaubert never understood why *Salambo* was not equally successful. For sheer literary craft it stood unequalled, but the vitality of the earlier

Flaubert had ebbed away. Its comparative failure with the public was due immediately to this deficiency."

Mackenzie's experience of life is wide, as that of every artist must be. During the War, one remembers, he was chief of an intelligence organization in the Near East. He was the hero of various adventures, the pleasures of which must have been very equivocal. His house, upon one occasion, was wrecked by an anti-Ally mob, which amused itself by climbing water-pipes and balcony, and firing through his windows, as a preliminary to assassinating him. But the novelist escaped by a ruse, thus demonstrating in despite of popular and proverbial wisdom that "great clerks" may also be "wise men." Upon some other occasion he was offered by the Greeks the hereditary governorship of a newly declared republic.

"I should have accepted it," he declared, "had we been still living under eighteenth-century conditions. But I should have been too immediately responsible to-day to the government at home. No room would have been left for personal initiative, for a free hand. There would have been cablegrams every morning, and though of course one can always cut a cable, yet the damage is so easily located and repaired. . . ."

Nevinson is the type of man one runs up against in all sorts of queer places. I first met him at "Le Duc"—or was it "Thomas"? At any rate, it was at one of the little art Cafés of Montmartre.

It was in the last phase of the War and cigarettes in Paris were practically unobtainable. I had been smoke-thirsty for two mortal days. I sat staring at the landlord—a reprehensible trick, but I drop into it through being uncommonly short-sighted. The landlord, poor wretch, supposed me in consequence to be some old frequenter of the place whom he had failed to recognize. He came forward—every Frenchman is a born comedian—shook hands with me very warmly, assured me that to see me there once more reminded him of old times, and calling to the girl at the cash desk, “Marie,” cried he, “give Monsieur that packet of Russian cigarettes.” No gift on this earth could have been more welcome at that moment—and of course I had never clapped eyes upon the landlord before that evening.

Where next did I meet Nevinson? Once, I think, at the Studio Club in the Haymarket, and next on the platform of the Gare du Nord at Brussels; at his back a waiter errant in a loose blue blouse, and a travelling buffet upon rubber-tired wheels whereon glasses of bock and “jambons” and uninviting little pies provoked a cloud of insects to plaintive song.

Nevinson is a talker. I have heard him described as “one of our three articulate painters.” Who were the other two? I forget completely.

“A man is usually willing to talk,” says Nevinson, “if he has something to say.” The extremely reticent man he regards much as some character in Ben Jonson, I forget which, regarded “Goodman Dull.”



C.T.W. Nevins

*Nevins is a talker. I have heard him described as  
"one of our three articulate painters."*





“Goodman Dull, thou hast spoken no word this long while.”

“Nor understood none, my lord.”

Let me see what I can recall of Nevinson's philosophy of painting. Only, I can't pretend to render him to any good effect, for he speaks too quickly for me to retain his actual words, except in patches. Nor can I give his laugh, which is not the subdued, intellectual chuckle, but loud and mirth-moving. Something of the savour of his talk must inevitably evaporate, but here is the gist of some half-hour's art-shop prattle.

“The discovery of photography torpedoed painting. Before that discovery painters were all attempting—whatever may be urged to the contrary—to paint precisely what they saw. But, as Nature is in perpetual flux, and the quickest sketch imaginable takes time to achieve, it was luckily quite impossible for them to do what they desired. And personality, individual vision, then as now, was of incalculable importance. Just compare, for one moment, the stylistic rendering of a nude by Ingres with the banality of a photograph! Compare with a photographic mist effect a Nocturne of Whistler's!

“Then photography was discovered and, to everybody's astonishment, totally failed to satisfy. To-day, the whole world realizes this. The most ignorant of advertising agents, the least expensive of cheap-jacks, has found out that an inferior line-drawing attracts more attention, gives more pleasure, than the best mere photograph ever produced.

"Photography, by a process of reaction, provoked all the excesses of the extremists of the 'advanced' schools of painting and of sculpture. For, since photography satisfies neither the intellect, nor the imagination, nor the emotions, it was not unnaturally assumed to be bad *in toto*, which produced a violent desire to escape from every effect which could even distantly be stigmatized as 'photographic.' Hence legs, arms and torsos, cylindrical, spherical, cubic, squat, or elongated, a limbo of shrieking abnormalities. Hence, in some cases, a shrinking from all reality, for dread lest realism should resemble photography.

"The misproportions of primitive painting and sculpture were eagerly seized upon for precedents. But the misproportions of the primitives sprang from primitive simplicity, not from anything analogous to twentieth-century sophistication. Nothing harder on earth than to imitate simplicity; always provided that one is not simple oneself.

"It is by no means easy to say precisely *where* photography fails. It is seldom decorative, in fact it is hardly ever decorative, but that is one defect only out of many."

"There is no mystery about photography?"

"Don't say *that, please*," interjects Nevinson, glancing about him with an air of comic apprehension. "If a photographer were to hear you say that, he would promptly give you a photograph of a mystery. It would be terrible. It would be a *statement* of a mystery, the emotional quality, the imaginative stimulus and, of course, the intellectual appeal, all playing Boojum together.

"Now, there is a Matisse, a nude, a girl sitting with her back towards us. A photograph of that girl would have been absolutely boring. Yet the subject would be the same. What makes the Matisse a masterpiece? Sheer intellectual appeal. The extraordinary simplification of line—there is really but one stroke of the pencil, one long and sometimes broken contour line—and yet you get an effect of form and what an effect! A convincing, a vivid impression of moulded beauty.

"If we reduce the matter to its lowest terms, we shall perhaps arrive at the conclusion that a photograph is an *analysis*. The damned machine doesn't *feel*. It *states*."

"The moon in a painting," said I, "is larger than the moon in reality. It is the moon which our emotions tell us is the true one. The moon of a painting to that of a photograph will be for sheer size in the proportion of one of the old five-shilling pieces to a threepenny bit."

"True enough," says Nevinson. "What, then, is it, to sum the matter up, that art gives us which the camera cannot? I don't like to say that that quality is 'suggestiveness,' I prefer to call it the 'imaginative urge.' The imagination is stirred, impelled into activity, is delighted to thrill and tingle and feel itself alive. This is what is demanded of us by those who are sufficiently sensitive to have any apprehension of the matter; not a fact, not a statement.

"The violence of the reaction against photography has worn itself out. We find that abstractions and mere stylistic forms are unsatisfying. There is a complete abandonment

amongst the painters of to-day, of cubism and futurism, just as there was, a short while back, of post-impressionism.

"Representational art has come back, but by this I decidedly do not mean mere 'visual' or photographic art. Now, there is a carnation in a pot—I could paint that carnation to resemble the original so closely that no one would ever look at it twice, and, having once looked at it, a man would forget a moment afterwards that he ever had done so. But there is a way of painting so that the blessed carnation just does *not* look like a carnation—I could show you my meaning in a moment, if I had my brushes here. I would paint it so that it would just fall short of resembling a carnation. Then you would look and look again. Sometimes, by a negative treatment, one can express a positive with violence. After all, one does *look* at a caricature when one does *not* look at a photograph, and the reason, you will find, is always the same. The photograph is a *statement*; the caricature an interpretation. But the effect which the caricaturist seeks to achieve is merely comic; what I have in mind is treatment which requires no common degree of subtlety and finesse."

I try to lead him on to talk about the portrait, by asking him whether he endorses the view which certain painters hold, and always have held, that in a portrait the purely psychological element should be subordinated to the æsthetic.

"So far as I am concerned," said he, "the question has been solved, once for all, by the master portraitists of the



Florentine Renaissance. They kept the psychological and æsthetic elements in the most perfect equipoise. In fact, they did more. They employed these two elements in such a fashion that either served to intensify the poignancy of the other. When people tell me that you cannot achieve a portrait without subduing some important factor to some other important factor, or set of factors, I grow very tired. A capable man is not always harping on what can *not* be done. It is many thousand times more interesting to find what *can* be done. There are very few feats in legitimate painting which lie beyond the realm of possibility."

Once I remember asking Nevinson whether he thought any one form of government more favourable than another to artistic development. My personal opinion, so far as I had formulated one, was that it made precious little difference what government was in power. The artist is not *produced* by any system of politics—though that notion is pleasing to the arrogance of politicians. Our first national epic, Beowulf, was composed at a period when prayers for protection against the fury of Norse pirates were being offered up in English parish churches.

Chaucer saw the Peasants' Rising—that first and most startling symptom of friction between capital and labour. He saw the King of England deposed, and knew like everybody else that he had been done to death in prison. There were other disasters incidental to that day—floods, fires, famine, the Black Death, the Hundred Years' War. A disastrous period for the arts, you might fancy. The reverse

would appear to be the truth. Chaucer, the first humanist poet of modern Europe, and the greatest singer after Shakespeare, was depicting in matchless verse all the society of that strange day. The author of "Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight" was expressing in the most enchanting of romances his love of crafts and costume, of wild nature in the good greenwood, of love itself, of the pageant of the seasons and of the adventure of being. That was a halcyon day for architects, and jewellers, and workers in fresco and in metals were busy from daybreak to dusk. An age of miniaturists and of emancipated ideas and of sculptors already working from the nude. Strange! The age of the Black Death was the age when, in the quaint phrase of the delightful Jusserand, "even the Madonnas were painted smiling." Shakespeare, Velasquez, Titian, Rabelais, Michelangelo lived and worked through days when the Church was busily employed in burning nonconformists—a ridiculous violence since surely even then some sort of substitute for the lethal chamber must have been obtainable? The peaceful age of Victoria gave us Browning, Swinburne, Shelley, Rossetti—and poetry was never more popular than during the last War. In fine, I do not believe that the artist is derived in any way from the system of government under which it is his chance to live.

Nevinson, however, is radically anti-democratic. He has none of that care-free "Plague of both your houses" which characterized the political creed of the gay Mercutio. He puts his case with convincing lucidity. "What?" he

asks, "has anybody yet succeeded in teaching a mob? A mob there always will be, and equally surely, that mob will always be somebody's tool. Better a thousand times that it should be the tool of the hereditary and futile aristocrat, than that of the tedious and inane professional agitator. The great majority of mankind will inevitably and invariably be fools, and their judgment in the arts will be as good a witness as need be to their inherent folly. There is no teaching them. Whoever, from the beginning of time to this present fleeting moment, has ever succeeded in teaching them anything?

"Look at the Church! What is it? A vast and marvellously organized educational establishment. They have really only ten points to drive home; ten points which they desire to impress upon the mighty masses. Do they succeed? And look at the apparatus which they bring into play! They have sought alliance with every type of artist. They have had the assistance of orators, architects, sculptors, illuminators, bookbinders, painters, musicians, singers, costumiers, goldsmiths and jewellers and workers in mosaic. They have confederated and taken counsel with bland, insinuating, fine-gentlemanly Jesuits, altruistic enthusiasts, and professional torturers. Rivers of blood have been shed and, at the end of it, what result? The 'Great War' and the 'Greater Peace'!—And, incidentally, have you ever met anybody who could even recite the ten commandments first go off without reference to the book of the words?"

" I understand that there are such people, but I don't actually happen to—— "

" Of course not, nor anybody else ! "

Nevinson is an admirable talker. He excites himself and his hearers. He has indeed so much of the orator's facility that I had left his studio a full five minutes before I suddenly called to mind that the demented Plebs took another view of the " Great War." Very absurd of them unquestionably, but *they* fancied, all very fantastic no doubt, that the ambition and megalomania of the House of Hohenzollern was one of the minor contributory causes of that disaster.

" No ! Democracy has substituted a false standard for every art. In place of the lute and the ballad, the gramophone and the syncopated hiccoughs. In place of the Old Master, the Christmas Annual and the sweet little girl who feeds the collie dog with oranges. Instead of the comedy of wit, the ' movies,' with the grey-haired old ' Mawther,' the super-human girls in the post offices of mining districts and the whole underworld of slop and slobber, of sentimental cowboys, crooks and vamps. It is just possible that we shall live to see a great Renaissance of the drama—the ' Public ' will all be at the films.

" Democracy has achieved nothing but destruction, and it has proved yesterday, proves to-day, will prove more thoroughly to-morrow, that *All Art, all intellectual creation, is esoteric.*

" But why discuss ? " concludes Nevinson, whose tea is

cold and whose cigarette, during this last magnificent flight, has become extinguished. "Except to Paris, I go nowhere. I see nobody and retire more and more into my shell. I have become a hermit. Yes, a hermit in a caravan. Excuse me—the 'phone. 'What? Yes, of course I'm coming!'

"My dear chap, excuse me, I must get dressed quick—dining with Gilbert Frankau. If you should pass the taxi rank would you mind—? Thanks awfully. Send him along quick!"





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